

- [ZUKU - ZWEI](#)

# CABALA.

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—Name and Origin (Hebrew form *Ḳabbalah* [קבלה, from קבל = "to receive"; literally, "the received or traditional lore"]):

The specific term for the esoteric or mystic doctrine concerning God and the universe, asserted to have come down as a revelation to elect saints from a remote past, and preserved only by a privileged few. At first consisting only of empirical lore, it assumed, under the influence of Neoplatonic and Neopythagorean philosophy, a speculative character. In the geonic period it is connected with a Mishnah-like text-book, the "Sefer Yeẓirah," and forms the object of the systematic study of the elect, called "mekubbalim" or "ba'ale ha-ḳabbalah" (possessors of, or adepts in, the Cabala). These receive afterward the name of "maskilim" (the wise), after Dan. xii. 10; and because the Cabala is called חכמה נסתרה ("ḥokmah nistarah" = the hidden wisdom), the initials of which are ח"ן, they receive also the name of יורעי ח"ן ("adepts in grace") (Eccl. ix. 11, Hebr.). From the thirteenth century onward the Cabala branched out into an extensive literature, alongside of and in opposition to the Talmud. It was written in a peculiar Aramaic dialect, and was grouped as commentaries on the Torah, around the Zohar as its holy book, which suddenly made its appearance.

The Cabala is divided into a theosophical or theoretical system, *Ḳabbalah 'Iyyunit* (קבלה עיונית) and a theurgic or practical Cabala, *קבלה כעשית*. In view of the fact that the name "Cabala" does not occur in literature before the eleventh century (see Landauer, "Orient. Lit." vi. 206; compare Zunz, "G. V." p. 415), and because of the pseudepigraphic character of the Zohar and of almost all the cabalistic writings, most modern scholars, among whom are Zunz, Grätz, Luzzatto, Jost, Steinschneider, and Munk (see bibliography below), have treated the Cabala with a certain bias and from a rationalistic rather than from a psychologico-historical point of view; applying the name of "Cabala" only to the speculative systems which appeared since the thirteenth century, under pretentious titles and with fictitious claims, but not to the mystic lore of the geonic and Talmudic times. Such distinction and partiality, however, prevent a deeper understanding of the nature and progress of the Cabala, which, on closer observation, shows a continuous line of development from the same roots and elements.

Meaning of the Word "Cabala."



Cabala comprised originally the entire traditional lore, in contradistinction to the written law (Torah), and therefore included the prophetic and hagiographic books of the Bible, which were supposed to have been "received" by the power of the Holy Spirit rather than as writings from God's hand (see Ta'an. ii. 1; R. H. 7a, 19a, and elsewhere in the Talmud; compare Zunz, "G. V." 2d ed., pp. 46, 366, 415, and Taylor, "Early Sayings of the Jewish Fathers," 1899, pp. 106 *et seq.*, 175 *et seq.*). Each "received" doctrine was claimed as tradition from the Fathers—"masoret me-Abotenu" (Josephus, "Ant." xiii. 10, § 6; 16, § 2; [Meg. 10b](#); Shek. vi. 1)—to be traced back to the Prophets or to Moses on Sinai (compare "mekubbalani" in Peah ii. 6; 'Eduy. viii. 7). So the Masorah, "the fence to the Torah" (Ab. iii. 13) is, as Taylor (*l.c.* p. 55) correctly states, "a correlation to Cabala." The chief characteristic of the Cabala is that, unlike the Scriptures, it was entrusted only to the few elect ones; wherefore, according to IV Esdras xiv. 5, 6, Moses, on Mount Sinai, when receiving both the Law and the knowledge of wondrous things, was told by the Lord: "These words shalt thou declare, and these shalt thou hide." Accordingly the rule laid down for the transmission of the cabalistic lore in the ancient Mishnah (Ḥag. ii. 1) was "not to expound the Chapter of Creation ("Ma'aseh Bereshit," Gen. i.) before more than one hearer; nor that of the Heavenly Chariot ("Merkabah," Ezek. i.; compare I Chron. xxviii. 18 and Ecclus. [Sirach] xlix. 8) to any but a man of wisdom and profound understanding"; that is to say, cosmogony and theosophy were regarded as esoteric studies ([Hag. 13a](#)). Such was the "Masoret ha-Hokmah" (the tradition of wisdom, handed over by Moses to Joshua (Tan., Wa'ethanan, ed. Buber, 13); and likewise the twofold philosophy of the Essenes, "the contemplation of God's being and the origin of the universe," specified by Philo ("Quod Omnis Probus Liber," xii.). Besides these there was the eschatology—that is, the secrets of the place and time of the retribution and the future redemption (Sifre, Wezot ha-Berakah, 357); "the secret chambers of the behemoth and leviathan" (Cant. R. i. 4); the secret of the calendar ("Sod ha-Ibbur")—that is, the mode of calculating the years with a view to the Messianic kingdom ([Ket. 111a-112a](#); Yer. R. H. ii. 58b); and, finally, the knowledge and use of the Ineffable Name, also "to be transmitted only to the saintly and discreet ones" (Zenu'im or Essenes; Kid. 71a; Yer. Yoma iii. 40d; Eccl. R. iii. 11), and of the angels (Josephus, "B. J." ii. 8, § 7). All these formed the sum and substance of the Mysteries of the Torah, "Sitre or Raze Torah" ([Pes. 119a](#); [Meg. 3a](#); Ab. vi. 1), "the things spoken only in a whisper" ([Hag. 14a](#)).

### Antiquity of the Cabala.

How old the Cabala is, may be inferred from the fact that as early a writer as Ben Sira warns against it in his saying: **אין לך עסק בנסתרות** = "Thou shalt have no business with secret things" (Ecclus. [Sirach] iii. 22; compare [Hag. 13a](#); Gen. R. viii.). In fact, the apocalyptic literature belonging to the second and first pre-Christian centuries contained the chief elements of the Cabala; and as, according to Josephus (*l.c.*), such writings were in the possession of the Essenes, and were jealously guarded by them against disclosure, for which they claimed a hoary antiquity (see Philo, "De Vita Contemplativa," iii., and Hippolytus, "Refutation of all Heresies," ix. 27), the Essenes have with sufficient reason been assumed by Jellinek ("B. H." ii., iii., Introductions and elsewhere), by Plessner ("Dat Mosheh wi-Yehudit," pp. iv. 47 *et seq.*), by Hilgenfeld ("Die Jüdische Apokalyptik," 1857, p. 257), by Eichhorn ("Einleitung in die Apoc. Schriften des Alten Testaments," 1795, pp. 434 *et seq.*), by Gaster ("The Sword of Moses," 1896, Introduction), by Kohler ("Test. Job," in Kohut Memorial Volume, pp. 266, 288 *et seq.*), and by others to be the originators of the Cabala.

That many such books containing secret lore were kept hidden away by the "wise" is clearly stated in IV Esdras xiv. 45-46, where Pseudo-Ezra is told to publish the twenty-four books of the canon openly that the worthy and the unworthy may alike read, but to keep the seventy other books hidden in order to "deliver them only to such as be wise" (compare Dan. xii. 10); for in them are the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the stream of knowledge (compare Soṭah xv. 3). A study of the few still existing apocryphal books discloses the fact, ignored by most modern writers on the Cabala and Essenism, that "the mystic lore" occasionally alluded to in the Talmudic or Midrashic literature (compare Zunz, "G. V." 2d ed., pp. 172 *et seq.*; Joël, "Religionsphilosophie des Sohar," pp. 45-54) is not only much more systematically presented in these older writings, but gives ample evidence of a continuous cabalistic tradition; inasmuch as the mystic literature of the geonic period is only a fragmentary reproduction of the ancient apocalyptic writings, and the saints and sages of the tannaic period take in the former the place occupied by the Biblical protoplasts, patriarchs, and scribes in the latter.

### Cabalistic Elements in the Apocrypha.

So, also, does the older Enoch book, parts of which have been preserved in the geonic mystic literature (see Jellinek, *l.c.*, and "Z. D. M. G." 1853, p. 249), by its angelology, demonology, and cosmology, give a fuller insight into the "Merkabah" and "Bereshit" lore of the ancients than the "Hekalot," which present but fragments, while the central figure of the Cabala, Meṭaṭron-Enoch, is seen in ch. lxx.-lxxi. in a process of transformation. The cosmogony of the Slavonic Enoch, a product of the first pre-Christian century (Charles, "The Book of the Secrets of Enoch," 1896, p. xxv.), showing an advanced stage compared with the older Enoch book, casts a flood of light upon the rabbinical cosmogony by its realistic description of the process of creation (compare ch. xxv.-xxx. and [Hag. 12a](#) *et seq.*; Yer. Hag. ii. 77a *et seq.*; Gen. R. i.-x.). Here are found the primal elements, "the stones of fire" out of which "the Throne of Glory" is made, and from which the angels emanate; "the glassy sea" (מִיָּא מִיָּא), beneath which the seven heavens, formed of fire and water (שָׁמַיִם = מַאֲשׁ וּמַיִם), are stretched out, and the founding of the world upon the abyss (אֲבֵן שְׁתִּיָּה); the preexistence of human souls (Plato, "Timæus," 36; [Yeb. 63b](#); Nid. 30b), and the formation of man by the Creative Wisdom out of seven substances (see Charles, note to ch. xxvi. 5 and xxx. 8, who refers to Philo and the Stoics for analogies); the ten classes of angels (ch. xx.); and, in ch. xxii., version A, ten heavens instead of seven, and an advanced chiliastic calendar system (ch. xv.-xvi., xxxii.; see [Millennium](#)). Its cabalistic character is shown by references to the writings of Adam, Seth, Cainan, Mahalalel, and Jared (ch. xxxiii. 10, and elsewhere).

### A Continuous Tradition.

More instructive still for the study of the development of cabalistic lore is the Book of Jubilees written under King John Hyrcanus (see Charles, "The Book of Jubilees," 1902, Introduction, pp. lviii. *et seq.*)—which also refers to the writings of Jared, Cainan, and Noah, and presents Abraham as the renewer, and Levi as the permanent guardian, of these ancient writings (ch. iv. 18, viii. 3, x. 13; compare Jellinek, "B. H." iii. 155, xii. 27, xxi. 10, xlv. 16)—because it offers, as early as a thousand years prior to the supposed date of the "Sefer Yeẓirah," a cosmogony based upon the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and connected with Jewish chronology and Messianology, while at the same time insisting upon the heptad as the holy number rather than upon the decadic system adopted by the later haggadists and the "Sefer Yeẓirah" (ch. ii. 23; compare Midr. Tadshe vi. and Charles's note, vi. 29 *et seq.*; Epstein, in "Rev. Et. Juives," xxii. 11; and regarding the number seven compare Ethiopic Enoch, lxxvii. 4 *et seq.* [see Charles's note]; Lev. R. xxix.; Philo, "De Opificios Mundi," 80-43, and Ab. v. 1-3; [Hag. 12a](#)). The Pythagorean idea of the creative powers of numbers and letters, upon which the "Sefer Yeẓirah" is founded, and which was known in tannaitic times—compare Rab's saying: "Bezalel knew how to combine [צִירָה] the letters by which heaven and earth were created" ([Ber. 55a](#)), and the saying of R. Judah b. Ilai ([Men. 29b](#)), quoted, with similar sayings of Rab, in Bacher, "Ag. Bab. Amor." pp. 18, 19—is here proved to be an old cabalistic conception. In fact, the belief in the magic power of the letters of the Tetragrammaton and other names of the Deity (compare Enoch, lxi. 3 *et seq.*; Prayer of Manasses; Kid. 71a; Eccl. R. iii. 11; Yer. Hag. ii. 77c) seems to have originated in Chaldea (see Lenormant, "Chaldean Magic," pp. 29, 43). Whatever, then, the theurgic Cabala was, which, under the name of "Sefer (or "Hilkot" Yeẓirah," induced Babylonian rabbis of the fourth century to "create a calf by magic" ([Sanh. 65b](#), 67b; Zunz, "G. V." 2d ed., p. 174, by a false rationalism ignores or fails to account for a simple though strange fact!), an ancient tradition seems to have coupled the name of this theurgic "Sefer Yeẓirah" with the name of Abraham as one accredited with the possession of esoteric wisdom and theurgic powers (see [Abraham, Apocalypse of](#), and [Abraham, Testament of](#); Beer, "Das Leben Abrahams," pp. 207 *et seq.*; and especially Testament of Abraham, Recension B, vi., xviii.; compare Kohler, in "Jew. Quart. Rev." vii. 584, note). As stated by Jellinek ("Beiträge zur Kabbalah," i. 3), the very fact that Abraham, and not a Talmudical hero like Akiba, is introduced in the "Sefer Yeẓirah," at the close, as possessor of the Wisdom of the Alphabet, indicates an old tradition, if not the antiquity of the book itself.

The "wonders of the Creative Wisdom" can also be traced from the "Sefer Yeẓirah," back to Ben Sira, *l.c.*; Enoch, xlii. 1, xlvi. 1, lxxxii. 2, xcii. 1; Slavonic Enoch, xxx. 8, xxxiii. 3 (see Charles's note for further parallels); IV Esdras xiv. 46; Soṭah xv. 3; and the Merkabah-travels to Test. Abraham, x.; Test. Job, xi. (see Kohler, in Kohut Memorial Volume, pp. 282-288); and the Baruch Apocalypse throughout, and even II Macc. vii. 22, 28, betray cabalistic traditions and terminologies.

### Gnosticism and Cabala.

But especially does [Gnosticism](#) testify to the antiquity of the Cabala. Of Chaldean origin, as suggested by Kessler (see "Mandæans," in Herzog-Hauck, "Real-Encyc.") and definitively shown by Anz ("Die Frage nach dem Ursprung des Gnostizismus," 1879), Gnosticism was Jewish in character long before it became Christian (see Joël, "Blicke in die Religionsgeschichte," etc., 1880, i. 203; Hönig, "Die Ophiten," 1889; Friedländer, "Der Vorchristliche Jüdische Gnostizismus," 1898; *idem*, "Der Antichrist," 1901). Gnosticism—that is, the cabalistic "Hokmah" (wisdom), translated into "Madda" (Aramaic, "Manda" = knowledge of things divine)—seems to have been the first attempt on the part of the Jewish sages to give the empirical mystic lore, with the help of Platonic and Pythagorean or Stoic ideas, a speculative turn; hence the danger of heresy from which Akiba and Ben Zoma strove to extricate themselves, and of which the systems of [Philo](#), an adept in Cabala (see "De Cherubim," 14; "De Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini," 15; "De Eo Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiatur," 48; "Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit," 22), and of [Paul](#) (see Matter, "History of Gnosticism," ii.), show many pitfalls (see [Gnosticism](#), [Minim](#)). It was the ancient Cabala which, while allegorizing the Song of Songs, spoke of [Adam Kadmon](#), or the God-man, of the "Bride of God," and hence of "the mystery of the union of powers" in God (see Conybeare, "Philo's Contemplative Life," p. 304), before Philo, Paul, the Christian Gnostics, and the medieval Cabala did. Speculative Cabala of old (IV Esd. iii. 21; Wisdom ii. 24) spoke of "the germ of poison from the serpent transmitted from Adam to all generations" (נחש וזרמה של) before Paul and R. Johanan (Ab. Zarah 22b) referred to it. And while the Gnostic classification of souls into pneumatic, psychic, and hylic ones can be traced back to Plato (see Joël, *l.c.* p. 132), Paul was not the first (or only one) to adopt it in his system (see [Hag. 14b](#); Cant. R. i. 3, quoted by Joël, compare Gen. R. xiv., where the five names for the soul are dwelt upon).

### Cabalistic Dualism.

The whole dualistic system of good and of evil powers, which goes back to Zoroastrianism and ultimately to old Chaldea, can be traced through Gnosticism; having influenced the cosmology of the ancient Cabala before it reached the medieval one. So is the conception underlying the cabalistic tree, of the right side being the source of light and purity, and the left the source of darkness and impurity ("siṭra yemina we siṭra aḥara), found among the Gnostics (see Irenæus, "Adversus Hæreses," i. 5, § 1; 11, § 2; ii. 24, § 6; Epiphanius, "Hæres," xxxii. 1, 2; "Clementine Homilies," vii. 3; compare Cant. R. i. 9; Matt. xxv. 33; Plutarch, "De Isiḳe," 48; Anz, *l.c.* 111). The fact also that the "Qelippot" (the scalings of impurity), which are so prominent in the medieval Cabala, are found in the old Babylonian incantations (see Sayce, "Hibbert Lectures," 1887, p. 472; Delitzsch, "Assyrisches Wörterbuch," s.v. קליפה), is evidence in favor of the antiquity of most of the cabalistic material.

It stands to reason that the secrets of the theurgic Cabala are not lightly divulged; and yet the Testament of Solomon recently brought to light the whole system of conjuration of angels and demons, by which the evil spirits were exorcised; even the magic sign or seal of King Solomon, known to the medieval Jew as the [Magen Dawid](#), has been resurrected (see Conybeare, in "Jew. Quart. Rev." xi. 1-45; also [Exorcism](#)).

To the same class belongs the "Sefer Refu'ot" (The Book of Healing), containing the prescriptions against all the diseases inflicted by demons, which Noah wrote according to the instructions given by the angel Raphael and handed over to his son Shem (Book of Jubilees, x. 1-14; Jellinek, "B. H." iii. 155-160; Introduction, p. xxx.). It was identified with the "Sefer Refu'ot" in possession of King Solomon and hidden afterward by King Hezekiah (see Pes. iv. 9, 56a; "B. H." *l.c.* p. 160; Josephus, "Ant." viii. 2, § 5; compare *idem*, "B. J." ii. 8, § 6, and the extensive literature in Schürer, "Gesch. des Volkes Israel," 3d ed., iii. 2, 99 *et seq.*), whereas the secret of the black art, or of healing by demonic powers, was transmitted to heathen tribes, to "the sons of Keturah" ([Sanh. 91a](#)) or the [Amorites](#) (compare Enoch, x. 7).

So striking is the resemblance between the [Shi'ur Komah](#) and the anthropomorphic description of the Deity by the Gnostics (see Irenæus, *l.c.* i. 14, § 3) and the letters of the alphabet laid across the body in Atbash (אתבש), or [Alpha and Omega](#) order, forming the limbs of the Macrocosmos, that the one casts light upon the other, as Gaster (in "Monatsschrift," 1893, p. 221) has shown. But so have "the garments of light," "the male and the female nature," "the double face," the eye, hair, arm, head, and crown of "the King of Glory," taken from the Song of Solomon, I Chron. xxix. 11; Ps. lxxviii. 18, and other familiar texts, even "the endless" (*En-Sof* = ἄπειρος), their parallels in ancient Gnostic writings (see Schmidt, "Gnostische Schriften in Koptischer Sprache," 1892, pp. 278, 293, 310, and elsewhere). On the other hand, both the mystic [Cross](#) ("Staurus" = X =



the letter *tav* of old; see Jewish Encyclopedia, i. 612b; Irenæus, *l.c.* i. 2, § 3; Justin, "Apology," i. 40; and Joël, *l.c.* p. 147) and the enigmatic primal "Qav laqav," or "Qavkav," taken from Isa. xxviii. 10, receive strange light from the ancient cabalistic cosmogony, which, based upon Job xxxviii. 4 *et seq.*, spoke of "the measuring-line"—Qav, the קו תהו (Isa. xxxiv. 11; compare קנה המדה, Gen. R. i. after Ezek. xl. 3)—drawn "crosswise"—שתי וערב (see Midr. ha-Gadol, ed. Schechter, 11; compare פקעיות של שתי כמין, Hag. xii. 1, and Joël, *l.c.*), and consequently applied also the term קו לקו (Qav le-qav), taken from Isa. xxviii. 10, to the prime motive power of creation (see Irenæus, *l.c.* i. 24, §§ 5, 6; Schmidt, *l.c.* p. 215; compare Matter, "Gnosticism," ii. 58; Joël, *l.c.* p. 141). This was to express the divine power that measured matter while setting it in motion; whereas the idea of God setting to the created world its boundary was found expressed in the name שדי ("the Almighty"), who says to the world די ("This sufficeth").

With the scanty materials at the disposal of the student of Gnosticism, it seems premature and hazardous at present to assert with certainty the close relationship existing between it and the ancient Cabala, as Matter, in his "History of Gnosticism," 1828 (German translation, 1833 and 1844), and Gfroerer, in his voluminous and painstaking work, "Gesch. des Urchristenthums," 1838, i. and ii., have done. Nevertheless it may be stated without hesitation that the investigations of Grätz ("Gnosticism und Judenthum," 1846), of Joël ("Religionsphilosophie des Sohar," 1849), and of other writers on the subject must be resumed on a new basis. It is also certain that the similarities, pointed out by Siegfried ("Philo von Alexandria," pp. 289-299), between the doctrines of Philo and those of the Zohar and the Cabala in general, are due to intrinsic relation rather than to mere copying.

As a rule, all that is empiric rather than speculative, and that strikes one as grossly anthropomorphic and mythological in the Cabala or Haggadah, such as the descriptions of the Deity as contained in the "Sifra de Zeni'uta" and "Iddra Zutta" of the Zohar, and similar passages in "Sefer Aẓilut" and "Raziel," belongs to a prerationalistic period, when no Simon ben Yoḥai lived to curse the teacher who represented the sons of God as having sexual organs and committing fornication (see Gen. R. xxvi.; compare Vita Adæ et Evæ, iii. 4, with Enoch, vii. 1 *et seq.*; also compare Test. Patr., Reuben, 5; Book of Jubilees, v. 1, and particularly xv. 27). Such matter may with a high degree of probability be claimed as ancient lore or Cabala (= "old tradition").

And as to speculative Cabala, it was not Persia with her tenth-century Sufism, but Alexandria of the first century or earlier, with her strange commingling of Egyptian, Chaldean, Judean, and Greek culture, that furnished the soil and the seeds for that mystic philosophy which knew how to blend the wisdom and the folly of the ages and to lend to every superstitious belief or practise a profound meaning. There sprang up that magic literature which showed the name of the Jewish God (אזכרות) and of the Patriarchs placed alongside of pagan deities and demons, and the Hermes books (המירוס ספרי, as copyists wrote for ספרי הירמוס—not "Homeros"—see Kohler, "Jew. Quart. Rev." v. 415, note), which, claiming an equal rank with the Biblical writings, enticed also Jewish thinkers. But above all it was Neoplatonism which produced that state of enthusiasm and entrancement that made people "fly in the air" by "the wagon of the soul" (מרכבה) and achieve all kinds of miracles by way of hallucinations and visions. It gave rise to those Gnostic songs (זמר יוני; Hag. 15b; Grätz, *l.c.* p. 16) which flooded also Syria and Palestine (see Gruppe, "Die Griechischen Culte und Mysterien," i. 1886, pp. 329, 443, 494, 497, 659; Von Harless, "Das Buch von den Ägyptischen Mysterien," 1858, pp. 13-20, 53-66, 75, and Dieterich, "Abraxas," 1891). The whole principle of emanation, with its idea of evil inherent in matter as the dross (קליפות) is found there (see Von Harless, *l.c.* p. 20), and the entire theurgic Cabala (קבלה מעשית) is in all its detail developed there; even the spirit-rapping and table-turning done in the seventeenth century by German cabalists by means of "shemot" (magic incantations; for the literature see Von Harless, *l.c.* pp. 130-132) have there their prototypes (Von Harless, *l.c.* p. 107).

## K.—History and System:

This remarkable product of Jewish intellectual activity can not be satisfactorily estimated as a whole unless the religioethical side of the Cabala is more strongly emphasized than has been the case heretofore. It constantly falls back upon Scripture for its origin and authenticity, and for its speculative-pantheistic and anthropomorphic-prophetic tendencies. While mysticism in general is the expression of the intensest religious feeling, where reason lies dormant, Jewish mysticism is essentially an attempt to harmonize universal reason with the

Scriptures; and the allegorical interpretation of the Biblical writings by the Alexandrians as well as by the Palestinians ([see Allegorical Interpretation](#)) may justly be regarded as its starting-point. These interpretations had their origin in the conviction that the truths of Greek philosophy were already contained in Scripture, although it was given only to the select few to lift the veil and to discern them beneath the letter of the Bible.

### Mystic Doctrines in Talmudic Times.

In Talmudic times the terms "Ma'aseh Bereshit" (History of Creation) and "Ma'aseh Merkabah" (History of the Divine Throne = Chariot; Hag. ii. 1; Tosef., *ib.*) clearly indicate the Midrashic nature of these speculations; they are really based upon Gen. i. and Ezek. i. 4-28; while the names "Sitre Torah" ([Hag. 13a](#)) and "Raze Torah" (Ab. vi. 1) indicate their character as secret lore. In contrast to the explicit statement of Scripture that God created not only the world, but also the matter out of which it was made, the opinion is expressed in very early times that God created the world from matter He found ready at hand—an opinion probably due to the influence of the Platonic-Stoic cosmogony (compare Philo, "De Opificiis Mundi," ii., who states this as a doctrine of Moses; see Siegfried, "Philo von Alexandria," p. 230). Eminent Palestinian teachers hold the doctrine of the preexistence of matter (Gen. R. i. 5, iv. 6), in spite of the protest of Gamaliel II. (*ib.* i. 9).

### The Six Elements.

A Palestinian Midrash of the fourth century (see Epstein, in "Rev. Etudes Juives," xxix. 77) asserts that three of the elements—namely, water, air, and fire—existed before the creation of the world; that water then produced the darkness, fire produced light, and air produced wisdom (רוח = "air" = "wisdom"), and the whole world thereupon was made by the combination of these six elements (Ex. R. xv. 22). The gradual condensation of a primal substance into visible matter, a fundamental doctrine of the Cabala, is already to be found in Yer. Hag. ii. 77a, where it is said that the first water which existed was condensed into snow; and out of this the earth was made. This is the ancient Semitic conception of the "primal ocean," known to the Babylonians as "Apsu" (compare Jastrow, "Religion of Babylonia"), and called by the Gnostics βύθος = ברו (Anz, "Die Frage nach dem Ursprung des Gnostizismus," p. 98). Rab's enumeration of the ten objects created on the first day—namely, heaven, earth, tohu, bohu, light, darkness, wind, water, day, and night ([Hag. 12a](#)) [the Book of Jubilees (ii. 2) has seven.—K.]—shows the conception of "primal substances" held by the rabbis of the third century. It was an attempt to Judaize the un-Jewish conception of primal substances by representing them also as having been created. Compare the teaching: "God created worlds after worlds, and destroyed them, until He finally made one of which He could say, 'This one pleases Me, but the others did not please Me'" (Gen. R. ix. 2). See also "Agadat Shir ha-Shirim," ed. Schechter, p. 6, line 58.

So, also, was the doctrine of the origin of light made a matter of mystical speculation, as instanced by a haggadist of the third century, who communicated to his friend "in a whisper" the doctrine that "God wrapped Himself in a garment of light, with which He illuminates the earth from one end to the other" (Gen. R. iii. 4; [see Abraham, Apocalypse of](#); compare Ex. R. xv. 22: "After He had clothed Himself in light, He created the world"). Closely related to this view is the statement made by R. Meïr, "that the infinite God limited or contracted Himself [צמצם] in order to reveal Himself" (Gen. R. iv. 4; Ex. R. xxxiv. 1). This is the germ of the Cabala doctrine of the "Zimzum," in idea as well as in terminology.

### God in the Theosophy of the Talmud.

In dwelling upon the nature of God and the universe, the mystics of the Talmudic period asserted, in contrast to Biblical transcendentalism, that "God is the dwelling-place of the universe; but the universe is not the dwelling-place of God" (Gen. R. lxviii. 9; Midr. Teh. xc.; Ex. xxiv. 11, LXX.) Possibly the designation מקום ("place") for God, so frequently found in Talmudic-Midrashic literature, is due to this conception, just as Philo, in commenting on Gen. xxviii. 11 (compare Gen. R. *l.c.*) says, "God is called 'ha ma'kom' [place] because He encloses the universe, but is Himself not enclosed by anything" ("De Somniis," i. 11). Spinoza may have had this passage in mind when he said that the ancient Jews did not separate God from the world. This conception of God is not only pantheistic, but also highly mystical, since it postulates the union of man with God (compare Creseas, "Or Adonai," i.); and both these ideas were further developed in the later Cabala. Even in very early times Palestinian as well as Alexandrian theology recognized the two attributes of God, "middat hadin," the attribute

of justice, and "middat ha-raḥamim," the attribute of mercy (Sifre, [Deut. 27](#); Philo, "De Opificiis Mundi," 60); and so is the contrast between justice and mercy a fundamental doctrine of the Cabala. Even the hypostasization of these attributes is ancient, as may be seen in the remark of a tanna of the beginning of the second century C.E. ([Hag. 14a](#)). Other hypostasizations are represented by the ten agencies through which God created the world; namely, wisdom, insight, cognition, strength, power, inexorableness, justice, right, love, and mercy ([Hag. 12a](#); Ab. R. N. xxxvii. counts only seven, while Ab. R. N., version B, ed. Schechter, xliii., counts ten, not entirely identical with those of the Talmud). While the Sefirot are based on these ten creative potentialities, it is especially the personification of wisdom (חכמה) which, in Philo, represents the totality of these primal ideas; and the Targ. Yer. i., agreeing with him, translates the first verse of the Bible as follows: "By wisdom God created the heaven and the earth." So, also, the figure of [Metatron](#) passed into the Cabala from the Talmud, where it played the rôle of the demiurgos ([see Gnosticism](#)), being expressly mentioned as God ([Sanh. 38b](#); [compare Antinomianism](#), note 1). Mention may also be made of the seven preexisting things enumerated in an old Baraita; namely, the Torah (= "Hokmah"), repentance (= mercy), paradise and hell (= justice), the throne of God, the (heavenly) Temple, and the name of the Messiah ([Pes. 54a](#)). Although the origin of this doctrine must be sought probably in certain mythological ideas, the Platonic doctrine of preexistence has modified the older, simpler conception, and the preexistence of the seven must therefore be understood as an "ideal" preexistence (see Ginzberg, "Die Haggada bei den Kirchenvätern," etc., pp. 2-10), a conception that was later more fully developed in the Cabala.

The attempts of the mystics to bridge the gulf between God and the world are especially evident in the doctrine of the preexistence of the soul [[compare Slavonic Enoch](#), xxiii. 5, and Charles's note.—K.] and of its close relation to God before it enters the human body—a doctrine taught by the Hellenistic sages (Wisdom viii. 19) as well as by the Palestinian rabbis ([Hag. 12b](#); 'Ab. Zarah 5a, etc.).

### The Pious.

Closely connected herewith is the doctrine that the pious are enabled to ascend toward God even in this life, if they know how to free themselves from the trammels that bind the soul to the body ([see Ascension](#)). Thus were the first mystics enabled to disclose the mysteries of the world beyond. According to Anz, *l.c.*, and Bousset, "Die Himmelsreise der Seele," in "Archiv für Religionswissenschaft," iv. 136 *et seq.*, the central doctrine of Gnosticism—a movement closely connected with Jewish mysticism—was nothing else than the attempt to liberate the soul and unite it with God. This conception explains the great prominence of angels and spirits in both the earlier and the later Jewish mysticism. Through the employment of mysteries, incantations, names of angels, etc., the mystic assures for himself the passage to God, and learns the holy words and formulas with which he overpowers the evil spirits that try to thwart and destroy him. Gaining thereby the mastery over them, he naturally wishes to exercise it even while still on earth, and tries to make the spirits serviceable to him. So, too, were the Essenes familiar with the idea of the journey to heaven (see Bousset, *l.c.* p. 143, explaining Josephus, "Ant." xviii. 1, § 5); and they were also masters of angelology. The practise of magic and incantation, the angelology and demonology, were borrowed from Babylonia, Persia, and Egypt; but these foreign elements were Judaized in the process, and took the form of the mystical adoration of the name of God and of speculations regarding the mysterious power of the Hebrew alphabet (see [Ber. 55a](#); compare [Pesik. R. 21](#) [ed. Friedmann, p. 109a], "the name of God creates and destroys worlds"), to become, finally, foundations of the philosophy of the "Sefer Yezirah."

### The Syzygies.

Another pagan conception which, in refined form, passed into the Cabala through the Talmud, was the so-called סוד הווי ("the mystery of sex"). [[Compare Eph. v. 33](#), and [Bride](#), and Joel, *l.c.*, pp. 158 *et seq.*—K.] Possibly this old conception underlies the Talmudical passages referring to the mystery of marriage, such as "the Shekinah dwells between man and woman" ([Sotah 17a](#)). An old Semitic view ([see Ba'al](#)) regards the upper waters compare Slavonic Book of Enoch, iii.; Test. Patr., Levi, 2; [Abraham, Testament of](#)) as masculine, and the lower waters as feminine, their union fructifying the earth (Gen. R. xiii.; Wertheimer, "Batte Midrashot," i. 6. Compare the passage, "Everything that exists has a mate [בן זוג]: Israel is the mate of the Sabbath; while the other days pair among themselves," Gen. R. xi. 8). Thus the Gnostic theory of syzygies (pairs) was adopted by the Talmud, and later was developed into a system by the Cabala.



The doctrine of emanation, also, common to both Gnosticism and the Cabala, is represented by a tanna of the middle of the second century C.E. (Gen. R. iv. 4; R. Meïr, "Parable of the Spring"). The idea that "the pious actions of the just increase the heavenly power" (Pesik., ed. Buber, xxvi. 166b); that "the impious rely on their gods," but that "the just are the support of God" (Gen. R. lxix. 3), gave rise to the later cabalistic doctrine of man's influence on the course of nature, inasmuch as the good and the evil actions of man reenforce respectively the good or the evil powers of life.

The heterogeneous elements of this Talmudic mysticism are as yet unfused; the Platonic-Alexandrian, Oriental-theosophic, and Judæo-allegorical ingredients being still easily recognizable and not yet elaborated into the system of the Cabala. Jewish monotheism was still transcendentalism. But as mysticism attempted to solve the problems of creation and world government by introducing sundry intermediary personages, creative potentialities such as Metatron, Shekinah, and so on, the more necessary it became to exalt God in order to prevent His reduction to a mere shadow; this exaltation being rendered possible by the introduction of the pantheistic doctrine of emanation, which taught that in reality *nothing* existed outside of God. Yet, if God is "the place of the world" and everything exists in Him, it must be the chief task of life to feel in union with God—a condition which the Merkabah-travelers, or, as the Talmud calls them, "the frequenters of paradise," strove to attain. Here is the point where speculation gives place to imagination. The visions which these mystics beheld in their ecstasies were considered as real, giving rise within the pale of Judaism to an anthropomorphic mysticism, which took its place beside that of the pantheists. Although Talmudic-Midrashic literature has left few traces of this movement (compare, e.g., [Ber. 7a](#), [Sanh. 95b](#)), the Rabbis opposing such extravagances, yet the writings of the church fathers bear evidence of many Judaizing Gnostics who were disciples of anthropomorphism (Origen, "De Principiis," i.; [compare Clementina](#), [Elcesaites](#), Minim).

#### Different Groups of Mystic Literature.

The mystical literature of the geonic period forms the link between the mystic speculations of the Talmud and the system of the Cabala; originating in the one and reaching completion in the other. It is extremely difficult to summarize the contents and object of this literature, which has been handed down in more or less fragmentary form. It may perhaps be most conveniently divided into three groups: (1) theosophic; (2) cosmogenetic; (3) theurgic. In regard to its literary form, the Midrashic-haggadic style may be distinguished from the liturgic-poetic style, both occurring contemporaneously. The theosophical speculations deal chiefly with the person of [Metatron](#)-Enoch, the son of Jared turned into a fiery angel, a minor Yhwh—a conception with which, as mentioned before, many mystics of the Talmudic age were occupied. Probably a large number of these Enoch books, claiming to contain the visions of Enoch, existed, of which, however, only fragments remain (see "Monatsschrift," viii. 68 *et seq.*, and [Enoch, Book of](#)).

#### "Metatron-Enoch."

Curiously enough, the anthropomorphic description of God ([see Shi'ur Qomah](#)) was brought into connection with Metatron-Enoch in the geonic mysticism. This vexatious piece of Jewish theosophy, which afforded to Christians as well as to Karaites ([compare Agobard](#); [Solomon b. Jeroham](#)) a welcome opportunity for an attack upon rabbinical Judaism, existed as a separate work at the time of the Geonim. Judging from the fragments of "Shi'ur Qomah" (in Jellinek, "B. H." iii. 91; ii. 41; in Wertheimer, "Hekalot," ch. xi.), it represented God as a being of gigantic dimensions, with limbs, arms, hands, feet, etc. The "Shi'ur Qomah" must have been held in high regard by the Jews, since Saadia tried to explain it allegorically—though he doubted that the tanna Ishmael could have been the author of the work (as quoted by Judah b. Barzilai in his commentary on "Sefer Yezirah," pp. 20-21)—and Hai Gaon, in spite of his emphatic repudiation of all anthropomorphism, defended it ("Teshubot ha-Geonim," Lick, p. 12a). The book probably originated at a time when the anthropomorphic conception of God was current—that is, in the age of Gnosticism, receiving its literary form only in the time of the Geonim. The Clementine writings, also, expressly teach that God is a body, with members of gigantic proportions; and so did Marcion. [Adam Kadmon](#), the "primal man" of the Elcesaites, was also, according to the conception of these Jewish Gnostics, of huge dimensions; viz., ninety-six miles in height and ninety-four miles in breadth; being originally androgynous, and then cleft in two, the masculine part becoming the Messiah, and the feminine part the Holy Ghost (Epiphanius, "Hæres." xxx. 4, 16, 17; liii. 1).



## "Shi'ur Qomah."

According to Marcion, God Himself is beyond bodily measurements and limitations, and as a spirit can not even be conceived; but in order to hold intercourse with man, He created a being with form and dimensions, who ranks above the highest angels. It was, presumably, this being whose shape and stature were represented in the "Shi'ur Qomah," which even the strict followers of Rabbinism might accept, as may be learned from the "Kerub ha-Meyuḥad" in the German Cabala, which will be discussed later in this article.

## The Heavenly Halls.

The descriptions of the heavenly halls ("Hekalot") in treatises held in high esteem at the time of the Geonim, and which have come down in rather incomplete and obscure fragments, originated, according to Hai Gaon, with those mystagogues of the Merkabah (**יורדי מרכבה**), "who brought themselves into a state of entranced vision by fasting, asceticism, and prayer, and who imagined that they saw the seven halls and all that is therein with their own eyes, while passing from one hall into another ([compare Ascension](#), and for a similar description of the Montanist ecstasy, Tertullian, "De Exhortatione Castitatis," x.). Although these Hekalot visions were to some extent productive of a kind of religious ecstasy, and were certainly of great service in the development of the liturgical poetry as shown in the Qedushah piyyuṭim, they contributed little to the development of speculative mysticism. This element became effective only in combination with the figure of Meṭatron or Meṭatron-Enoch, the leader of the Merkabah-travelers on their celestial journeys, who were initiated by him into the secrets of heaven, of the stars, of the winds, of the water, and of the earth, [[see Meṭatron](#), and compare Mithras as driver of the Heavenly Chariot in "Dio Chrysostomus," ii. 60, ed. Dindorf; Windischmann, "Zoroastrische Studien," 1863, pp. 309-312; and Kohler, "Test. of Job," p. 292.—K.]. Hence, many cosmological doctrines originally contained in the books of Enoch were appropriated, and the transition from theosophy to pure cosmology was made possible. Thus, in the Midr. Kohen (Jellinek, "B. H." ii. 23, 27), which is closely related to the "Seder Rabba di-Bereshit" (in Wertheimer, "Botte Midrashot," i. 18), the Torah, identical with the "Wisdom" of the Alexandrians, is represented as primeval and as the creative principle of the world, which produced the three primal elements, water, fire, and light, and these, in their turn, when commingled, produced the universe.

## Cosmological Theories.

In the description of the "six days of creation," in the Midrash in question, the important statement is made that the water disobeyed God's command—an old mythological doctrine of God's contest with matter (here represented by water), which in the later Cabala serves to account for the presence of evil in the world. In "Seder Rabba di-Bereshit," however, the contest is between the masculine and feminine waters which strove to unite themselves, but which God separated in order to prevent the destruction of the world by water; placing the masculine waters in the heavens, and the feminine waters on the earth (*l.c.* p. 6). Independently of the creation, the "Baraita de-Middot ha-'Olam" and the "Ma'aseh Bereshit" describe the regions of the world with paradise in the east and the nether world in the west. All these descriptions—some of them found as early as the second pre-Christian century, in the Test. of Abraham and in Enoch; and, later on, in the Christian apocalyptic literature—are obviously remnants of ancient Essene cosmology.

## Theurgic Cabala.

The mysticism of this time had a practical as well as a theoretical side. Any one knowing the names and functions of the angels could control all nature and all its powers (compare, for example, Lam. R. ii. 8; and [Hananeel](#) in Rabbinical Literature). Probably entrusted formerly only to oral tradition, the ancient names were written down by the mystics of the geonic period; and so Hai Gaon (in Eliezer Ashkenazi's collection, "Ta'am Zeḳenim," p. 56b) mentions a large number of such works as existing in his time: the "Sefer ha-Yashar," "Ḥarba de-Mosheh," "Raza Rabbah," "Sod Torah," "Hekalot Rabbati," "Hekalot Zuṭrati." Of all these works, aside from the [Hekalot](#), only the "Ḥarba de-Mosheh" has recently been published by Gaster ("The Sword of Moses," in "Jour. Royal Asiatic Soc." 1896; also printed separately). This book consists almost entirely of mystical names by means of which man may guard himself against sickness, enemies, and other ills, and may subjugate nature. These and other works later on formed the basis of the theurgic Cabala. The amplifications upon paradise and hell, with their divisions, occupy a totally independent and somewhat peculiar position in the geonic mysticism.

They are ascribed for the greater part to the amora Joshua b. Levi; but, in addition to this hero of the Haggadah, Moses himself is alleged to have been the author of the work "Ma'ayan Hōkmah" (compare *Soṭah* ix. 15, which gives an account of heaven and the angels).

### Mystical Literature in Geonic Times.

Aside from the "Sefer Yeẓirah," which occupies a position of its own, the following is nearly a complete list of the mystic literature of the time of the Geonim, as far as it is preserved and known to-day: (1) "Alfa Beta de Rabbi Akiba," in two versions (Jellinek, "B. H." iii.); (2) "Gan 'Eden," in different versions (Jellinek, *l.c.* ii., iii., v.); (3) "[Maseket] Gehinnom" (Jellinek, *l.c.* i.); (4) "Hārba de-Mosheh," ed. Gaster, 1896, reprinted from "Jour. Royal Asiatic Soc," 1896; (5) "Hibbuṭ ha-Ḳeber" (Jellinek, *l.c.* i.); (6) "Hekalot," in several recensions (Jellinek, *l.c.* ii., iii.; Wertheimer, "Jerusalem," 1889, the text varying considerably from that of Jellinek: the Book of Enoch is likewise a version of "Hekalot"); (7) "Haggadot Shema' Yisrael" (Jellinek, *l.c.* v.; also belonging probably to the time of the Geonim); (8) "[Midrash] Konen" (printed several times; also in Jellinek, *l.c.* i.); (9) "Ma'aseh Merkabah" (in Wertheimer, "Botte Midrashot," ii.; a very ancient "Hekalot" version); (10) "Ma'aseh de Rabbi Joshua b. Levi," in different recensions ([compare Apocalyptic Literature, Neo-Hebraic](#), No. 5); (11) "Ma'ayan Hōkmah" (Jellinek, *l.c.* i.); (12) "Seder Rabba di-Bereshit," in Wertheimer, *l.c.* i.); (13) "Shimmusha Rabba we-Shimmusha Zuṭṭa" (Jellinek, *l.c.* vi.).

Mystical fragments, have been preserved in *Pirḳe R. El.*, *Num. R.*, and *Midr. Tadshe*; also in the "Book of Raziel," which, though composed by a German cabalist of the thirteenth century, contains important elements of the geonic mysticism.

### Origin of the Speculative Cabala.

Eleazar of Worms' statement that a Babylonian scholar, [Aaron b. Samuel](#) by name, brought the mystic doctrine from Babylonia to Italy about the middle of the ninth century, has been found to be actually true. Indeed, the doctrines of the "Kerub ha-Meyuḥad," of the mysterious power of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and of the great importance of the angels, are all found in the geonic mystic lore. Even those elements that seem later developments may have been transmitted orally, or may have formed parts of the lost works of the old mystics. If, now, the German Cabala of the thirteenth century is to be regarded as merely a continuation of geonic mysticism, it follows that the speculative Cabala arising simultaneously in France and Spain must have had a similar genesis. It is the [Sefer Yeẓirah](#) which thus forms the link between the Cabala and the geonic mystics. The date as well as the origin of this singular book are still moot points, many scholars even assigning it to the Talmudic period. It is certain, however, that at the beginning of the ninth century the work enjoyed so great a reputation that no less a man than Saadia wrote a commentary on it. The question of the relation between God and the world is discussed in this book, the oldest philosophical work in the Hebrew language.

### The "Sefer Yeẓirah."

The basic doctrines of the "Sefer Yeẓirah" are as follows: The fundamentals of all existence are the ten Sefirot. These are the ten principles that mediate between God and the universe. They include the three primal emanations proceeding from the Spirit of God: (1) **רוח** (literally, "air" or "spirit," probably to be rendered "spiritual air"), which produced (2) "primal water," which, in turn, was condensed into (3) "fire." Six others are the three dimensions in both directions (left and right); these nine, together with the Spirit of God, form the ten Sefirot. They are eternal, since in them is revealed the dominion of God. The first three preexisted ideally as the prototypes of creation proper, which became possible when infinite space, represented by the six other Sefirot, was produced. The Spirit of God, however, is not only the beginning but is also the end of the universe; for the Sefirot are closely connected with one another, "and their end is in their origin, as the flame is in the coal."

While the three primal elements constitute the substance of things, the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet constitute the form. The letters hover, as it were, on the boundary-line between the spiritual and the physical world; for the real existence of things is cognizable only by means of language, *i.e.*, the human capacity for conceiving thought. As the letters resolve the contrast between the substance and the form of things, they represent the solvent activity of God; for everything that exists by means of contrasts, which find their

solution in God, as, for instance, among the three primal elements, the contrasts of fire and water are resolved into **רוח** ("air" or "spirit").

### Mysticism of Jewish Heretics.

The importance of this book for the later Cabala, overestimated formerly, has been underestimated in modern times. The emanations here are not the same as those posited by the cabalists; for no graduated scale of distance from the primal emanations is assumed, nor are the Sefirot here identical with those enumerated in the later Cabala. But the agreement in essential points between the later Cabala and the "Sefer Yezirah" must not be overlooked. Both posit mediate beings in place of immediate creation out of nothing; and these mediate beings were not created, like those posited in the various cosmogonies, but are emanations. The three primal elements in the "Sefer Yezirah," which at first existed only ideally and then became manifest in form, are essentially identical with the worlds of [Azilut](#) and [Beriah](#) of the later Cabala. In connection with the "Sefer Yezirah" the mystical speculations of certain Jewish sects must be mentioned, which, toward the year 800, began to spread doctrines that for centuries had been known only to a few initiated ones. Thus the Maghariyites taught that God, who is too exalted to have any attributes ascribed to Him in Scripture, created an angel to be the real ruler of the world [compare the **שר העולם** and Metatron in the Talmud.—K.]; and to this angel everything must be referred that Scripture recounts of God (Kirkisani, extracts from his manuscript quoted by Harkavy in Rabinowicz's Hebrew translation of Grätz's "Gesch. der Juden," iii. 496; separately under the title "Le-Ḳorot ha-Kittot be-Yisrael"). This Jewish form of the Gnostic Demiurge, which was also known to the Samaritans (Baneth, "Marquah, on the twenty two Letters of the Alphabet," pp. 52-54), was accepted with slight modifications by the Karaites (Judah Hadassi, "Eshkol ha-Kofer," 25c, 26b) as well as by the German cabalists, as will be shown further on. Benjamin Nahawendi seems to have known of other emanations in addition to this Demiurge (see Harkavy, *l.c.* v. 16). These, of course, were not new theories originating at this time, but an awakening of Jewish Gnosticism, that had been suppressed for centuries by the increasing preponderance of Rabbinism, and now reappeared not by chance, at a time when Sadduceism, the old enemy of Rabbinism, also reappeared, under the name of Karaism. But while the latter, as appealing to the masses, was energetically and even bitterly attacked by the representatives of Rabbinism, they made allowance for a revival of Gnosticism. For, although the cabalistic treatises ascribed to certain geonim were probably fabricated in later times, it is certain that numbers of the geonim, even many who were closely connected with the academies, were ardent disciples of mystic lore. The father of the German Cabala was, as is now known, a Babylonian (see [Aaron b. Samuel ha-Nasi](#)), who emigrated to Italy in the first half of the ninth century, whence the Kalonymides later carried their teachings to Germany, where in the thirteenth century an esoteric doctrine, essentially identical with that which prevailed in Babylon about 800, is accordingly found.

### Influence of Greco-Arabic Philosophy.

While the branch of the Cabala transplanted to Italy remained untouched by foreign influences, the reaction of Greco-Arabic philosophy on Jewish mysticism became apparent in the Arabic-speaking countries. The following doctrines of Arab philosophy especially influenced and modified Jewish mysticism, on account of the close relationship between the two. The "Faithful Brothers of Basra," as well as the Neoplatonic Aristotelians of the ninth century, have left their marks on the Cabala. The brotherhood taught, similarly to early Gnosticism, that God, the highest Being, exalted above all differences and contrasts, also surpassed everything corporeal and spiritual; hence, the world could only be explained by means of emanations. The graduated scale of emanations was as follows: (1) the creating spirit (**voûς**); (2) the directing spirit, or the world-soul; (3) primal matter; (4) active nature, a power proceeding from the world-soul; (5) the abstract body, also called secondary matter; (6) the world of the spheres; (7) the elements of the sublunary world; and (8) the world of minerals, plants, and animals composed of these elements. These eight form, together with God, the absolute One, who is in and with everything, the scale of the nine primal substances, corresponding to the nine primary numbers and the nine spheres. These nine numbers of the "Faithful Brothers" (compare De Boer, "Gesch. der Philosophie im Islam," p. 84; Dieterici, "Die Sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles," p. 38; *idem*, "Weltseele," p. 15) have been changed by a Jewish philosopher of the middle of the eleventh century into ten, by counting the four elements not as a unit, but as two ("Torat ha-Nefesh," ed. Isaac Broydé, pp. 70, 75; compare, also, Guttman, in "Monatsschrift," xlii. 450).

## Gabirol's, Influence upon the Cabala.

Solomon ibn Gabirol's doctrines influenced the development of the Cabala more than any other philosophical system; and his views on the will of God and on the intermediate beings between God and the creation were especially weighty. Gabirol considers God as an absolute unity, in whom form and substance are identical; hence, no attributes can be ascribed to God, and man can comprehend God only by means of the beings emanating from Him. Since God is the beginning of all things, and composite substance the last of all created things, there must be intermediate links between God and the universe; for there is necessarily a distance between the beginning and the end, which otherwise would be identical.

The first intermediate link is the will of God, the hypostasis of all things created; Gabirol meaning by will the creative power of God manifested at a certain point of time, and then proceeding in conformity with the laws of the emanations. As this will unites two contrasts—namely, God, the actor, and substance, the thing acted upon—it must necessarily partake of the nature of both, being *factor* and *factum* at the same time. The will of God is immanent in everything; and from it have proceeded the two forms of being, "materia universalis" (ὕλη) and "forma universalis." But only God is "creator ex nihilo": all intermediary beings create by means of the graduated emanation of what is contained in them potentially. Hence, Gabirol assumes five intermediary beings (אמנוניות) between God and matter; namely: (1) will; (2) matter in general and form; (3) the universal spirit (שכל הכללי); (4) the three souls, namely, vegetative, animal, and thinking soul; and (5) the nature, the motive power, of bodies. Gabirol (quoted by Ibn Ezra, commentary on Isa. xliii. 7) also mentions the three cabalistic worlds, Beriah, Yeẓirah, and 'Asiyah; while he considers Aẓilut to be identical with the will. The theory of the concentration of God, by which the Cabala tries to explain the creation of the finite out of the infinite, is found in mystical form in Gabirol also (see Munk, "Mélanges," pp. 284, 285).

Still, however great the influence which Gabirol exercised on the development of the Cabala, it would be incorrect to say that the latter is derived chiefly from him. The fact is that when Jewish mystic lore came in contact with Arabic-Jewish philosophy, it appropriated those elements that appealed to it; this being especially the case with Gabirol's philosophy on account of its mystical character. But other philosophical systems, from Saadia to Maimonides, were also laid under contribution. Thus the important German cabalist Eleazar of Worms was strongly influenced by Saadia; while Ibn Ezra's views found acceptance among the Germanas well as the Spanish cabalists. Possibly even Maimonides, the greatest representative of rationalism among the Jews of the Middle Ages, contributed to the cabalistic doctrine of the "En-Sof" by his teaching that no attributes could be ascribed to God [unless it be of Pythagorean origin (see Bloch, in Winter and Wünsche, "Jüdische Literatur," iii. 241, note 3).—

## K. The German Cabala.

The esoteric doctrines of the Talmud, the mysticism of the period of the Geonim, and Arabic Neo-platonic philosophy are thus the three chief constituents of the Cabala proper as it is found in the thirteenth century. These heterogeneous elements also explain the strange fact that the Cabala appeared at the same time in two different centers of culture, under different social and political conditions, each form being entirely different in character from the other. The German Cabala is a direct continuation of geonic mysticism. Its first representative is Judah the Pious (died 1217), whose pupil, Eleazar of Worms, is its most important literary exponent. Abraham Abulafia was its last representative, half a century later. The correctness of Eleazar's statement (in Del Medigo's "Maẓref la-Hokmah," ed. 1890, pp. 64, 65), to the effect that the Kalonymides carried the esoteric doctrines with them from Italy to Germany about 917, has been satisfactorily established. Till the time of Eleazar these doctrines were in a certain sense the private property of the Kalonymides, and were kept secret until Judah the Pious, himself a member of this family, commissioned his pupil Eleazar to introduce the oral and written esoteric doctrine into a larger circle.

## Christian and Jewish Mysticism.

The essential doctrines of this school are as follows: God is too exalted for mortal mind to comprehend, since not even the angels can form an idea of Him. In order to be visible to angels as well as to men, God created out of divine fire His כבוד ("majesty"), also called כרוז המיוחד which has size and shape and sits on a throne in the



east, as the actual representative of God. His throne is separated by a curtain (פרנוד) on the east, south, and north from the world of angels; the side on the west being uncovered [compare, however, God's Shekinah dwelling in the east ("Apostolic Constitutions," ii. 57).—K.], so that the light of God, who is in the west, may illuminate it. All the anthropomorphic statements of Scripture refer to this "majesty" (כבוד), not to God Himself, but to His representative. Corresponding to the different worlds of the Spanish cabalists, the German cabalists also assume four (sometimes five) worlds; namely: (1) the world of the "glory" (כבוד) just mentioned; (2) the world of angels; (3) the world of the animal soul; and (4) the world of the intellectual soul. It is easy to discern that this curious theosophy is not a product of the age in which the German cabalists lived, but is made up of ancient doctrines, which, as stated above, originated in the Talmudic period. The Germans, lacking in philosophical training, exerted all the greater influence on the practical Cabala as well as on ecstatic mysticism. Just as in Spain about this time the deeply religious mind of the Jews rose in revolt against the cold Aristotelian rationalism that had begun to dominate the Jewish world through the influence of Maimonides, so the German Jews, partly influenced by a similar movement within Christianity, began to rise against the traditional ritualism. Judah the Pious (Introduction to "Sefer Hasidim") reproaches the Talmudists with "poring too much over the Talmud without reaching any results." Hence, the German mystics attempted to satisfy their religious needs in their own way; namely, by contemplation and meditation. Like the Christian mystics (Preger, "Gesch. der Deutschen Mystik," p. 91), who symbolized the close connection between the soul and God by the figure of marriage, the Jewish mystics described the highest degree of love of man for God in sensuous forms in terms taken from marital life.

While study of the Law was to the Talmudists the very acme of piety, the mystics accorded the first place to prayer, which was considered as a mystical progress toward God, demanding a state of ecstasy. It was the chief task of the practical Cabala to produce this ecstatic mysticism, already met with among the Merkabah-travelers of the time of the Talmud and the Geonim; hence, this mental state was especially favored and fostered by the Germans. Alphabetical and numeral mysticism constitutes the greater part of Eleazar's works, and is to be regarded simply as means to an end; namely, to reach a state of ecstasy by the proper employment of the names of God and of angels, "a state in which every wall is removed from the spiritual eye" (Moses of Tachau, in "Oẓar Neḥmad," iii. 84; compare Güdemann, "Gesch. des Erziehungswesens," i. 159 *et seq.*).

The point of view represented by the anonymous book "Keter Shem-Ṭob" (ed. Jellinek, 1853), ascribed to Abraham of Cologne and certainly a product of the school of Eleazar of Worms, represents the fusion of this German Cabala with the Provençal-Spanish mysticism. According to this work, the act of creation was brought about by a primal power emanating from the simple will of God. This eternal, unchangeable power transformed the potentially existing universe into the actual world by means of graduated emanations. These conceptions, originating in the school of Azriel, are herein combined with Eleazar's theories on the meaning of the Hebrew letters according to their forms and numerical values. The central doctrine of this work refers to the Tetragrammaton; the author assuming that the four letters *yod*, *he*, *vaw*, and *he* (יהוה) were chosen by God for His name because they were peculiarly distinguished from all other letters. Thus *yod*, considered graphically, appears as the mathematical point from which objects were developed, and therefore symbolizes the spirituality of God to which nothing can be equal. As its numerical value equals ten, the highest number, so there are ten classes of angels, and correspondingly the seven spheres with the two elements—fire cohering with air, and water with earth, respectively—and the One who directs them all, making together ten powers; and finally the ten Sefirot. In this way the four letters of the Tetragrammaton are explained in detail.

A generation later a movement in opposition to the tendencies of this book arose in Spain; aiming to supplant speculative Cabala by a prophetic visionary one. [Abraham Abulafia](#) denied the doctrines of emanations and the Sefirot, and, going back to the German mystics, asserted that the true Cabala consisted in letter and number mysticism, which system, rightly understood, brings man into direct and close relations with the "ratio activa" (שכל הפועל), the active intelligence of the universe, thus endowing him with the power of prophecy. In a certain sense Joseph b. Abraham Gikatilla, a cabalist eight years younger than Abulafia, may also be included in the German school, since he developed the letter and vowel mysticism, thereby introducing the practical Cabala into many circles. Yet Gikatilla, like his contemporary Tobias Abulafia, still hesitates between the abstract speculative Cabala of the Provençal-Spanish Jews and the concrete letter symbolism of the Germans. These two

main movements are finally combined in the Zoharistic books, wherein, as Jellinek rightly says, "the syncretism of the philosophical and cabalistic ideas of the century appears complete and finished."

### The Cabala in Provence.

While the German mystics could refer to authentic traditions, the cabalists of Spain and southern France were obliged to admit that they could trace their doctrines, which they designated as "the tradition" ("Qabbalah"; thus an Oriental scholar as early as 1223; compare Harkavy, Hebrew transl. of Grätz's "Gesch. der Juden," v. 47), to authorities no older than the twelfth century. The modern historian has greater difficulties in determining the origin of the Cabala in Provence than the cabalists themselves had; for they agreed that the esoteric doctrines had been revealed by the prophet Elijah, in the beginning of the twelfth century, to Jacob ha-Nazir, who initiated Abraham b. David of Posquières, whose son, Isaac the Blind, transmitted them further. But Isaac the Blind can not possibly be credited with being the originator of the speculative Cabala, for it is far too complicated to be the work of one man, as is evident by the writings of Azriel (born about 1160), the alleged pupil of Isaac. Azriel, moreover, speaks of the Sefirot, of the En-Sof, and of the cabalists of Spain (in Sachs's "Ha-Paliṭ," p. 45); and it is absolutely impossible that Isaac the Blind, who was not much older than Azriel (his father Abraham b. David died in 1198), could have founded a school so quickly that Spanish scholars would be able to speak of the contrast between cabalists and philosophers as Azriel does. If there be any truth in this tradition of the cabalists, it can only mean that the relation of Isaac the Blind to the speculative Cabala was the same as that of his contemporary Eleazar of Worms to German mysticism; namely, that just as the latter made the esoteric doctrines—which were for centuries in the possession of one family, or at any rate of a very small circle—common property, so Isaac introduced the doctrines of the speculative Cabala for the first time into larger circles.

It may furthermore be assumed that the speculative philosophy of Provence, like German mysticism, originated in Babylon: Neoplatonism, reaching there its highest development in the eighth and ninth centuries, could not but influence Jewish thought. Gabirol, as well as the author of "Torat ha-Nefesh," bears evidence of this influence on Jewish philosophy; while the Cabala took up the mystic elements of Neoplatonism. The Cabala, however, is not a genuine product of the Provençal Jews; for just those circles in which it is found were averse to the study of philosophy. The essential portions of the Cabala must, on the contrary, have been carried to Provence from Babylon; being known only to a small circle until Aristotelianism began to prevail, when the adherents of the speculative Cabala were forced to make their doctrine public.

### The Treatise on Emanation.

The earliest literary product of the speculative Cabala is the work "Masseket Aẓilut," which contains the doctrine of the four graduated worlds as well as that of the concentration of the Divine Being. The form in which the rudiments of the Cabala are presented here, as well as the emphasis laid on keeping the doctrine secret and on the compulsory piety of the learners, is evidence of the early date of the work. At the time when "Masseket Aẓilut" was written the Cabala had not yet become a subject of general study, but was still confined to a few of the elect. The treatment is on the whole the same as that found in the mystical writings of the time of the Geonim, with which the work has much in common; hence, there is no reason for not regarding it as a product of that time. The doctrines of Meṭaṭron, and of angelology especially, are identical with those of the Geonim, and the idea of the Sefirot is presented so simply and unphilosophically that one is hardly justified in assuming that it was influenced directly by any philosophical system.

### "Bahir."

Just as in the "Masseket Aẓilut" the doctrine of the ten Sefirot is based on the "Sefer Yeẓirah" (ed. Jellinek, p. 6, below), so the book [Bahir](#), which, according to some scholars, was composed by Isaac the Blind, and which in any case originated in his school, starts from the doctrines of the "Sefer Yeẓirah," which it explains and enlarges. This book was of fundamental importance in more than one way for the development of the speculative Cabala. The Sefirot are here divided into the three chief ones—primal light, wisdom, and reason—and the seven secondary ones that have different names. This division of the Sefirot, which goes through the entire Cabala, is found as early as Pirḳe R. Eliezer III., from which the "Bahir" largely borrowed; but here for the first time the doctrine of the emanation of the Sefirot is clearly enunciated. They are conceived as the intelligible primal

principles of the universe, the primary emanations of the Divine Being, that together constitute the **קַבְּלָה** (τὸ πᾶν = "the universe"). The emanation is regarded, not as having taken place once, but as continuous and permanent; and the author has such an imperfect conception of the import of this idea that he regards the emanation as taking place all at once, and not in graduated series. But this assumption annihilates the whole theory of emanation, which attempts to explain the gradual transition from the infinite to the finite, comprehensible only in the form of a graduated series.

### Opposition to Aristotelianism.

On the whole, the contents of the book—which seems to be a compilation of loosely connected thoughts—justify the assumption that it is not the work of one man or the product of one school, but the first serious attempt to collect the esoteric doctrines that for centuries had circulated orally in certain circles of Provence, and to present them to a larger audience. The work is important because it gave to those scholars who would have nothing to do with the philosophy then current—namely, Aristotelianism—the first incentive to a thorough study of metaphysics. The first attempt to place the cabalistic doctrine of the Sefirot on a dialectic basis could have been made only by a Spanish Jew, as the Provençal Jews were not sufficiently familiar with philosophy, and the few among them that devoted themselves to this science were pronounced Aristotelians who looked with contempt upon the speculations of the cabalists.

### Azriel.

It was Azriel (1160-1238), a Spaniard with philosophical training, who undertook to explain the doctrines of the Cabala to philosophers and to make it acceptable to them. It should be noted particularly that Azriel (in Sachs, "Ha-Paliṭ," p. 45) expressly says that philosophical dialectics is for him only the means for explaining the doctrines of Jewish mysticism, in order that "those also who *do not believe*, but ask to have everything proved, may convince themselves of the truth of the Cabala." True disciples of the Cabala were satisfied with its doctrines as they were, and without philosophical additions. Hence the actual form of the Cabala as presented by Azriel must not be regarded as absolutely identical with its original one. Starting from the doctrine of the merely negative attributes of God, as taught by the Jewish philosophy of the time ([see Attributes](#)), Azriel calls God the "En-Sof" (אֵין סוֹף), the absolutely Infinite, that can be comprehended only as the negation of all negation. From this definition of the En-Sof, Azriel deduces the potential eternity of the world—the world with all its manifold manifestations was potentially contained within the En-Sof; and this potentially existing universe became a reality in the act of creation. The transition from the potential to the actual is a free act of God: but it can not be called creation; since a "creatio ex nihilo" is logically unthinkable, and nothing out of which the world could be formed exists outside of God, the En-Sof. Hence, it is not correct to say that God creates, but that He irradiates; for as the sun irradiates warmth and light without diminishing its bulk, so the En-Sof irradiates the elements of the universe without diminishing His power. These elements of the universe are the Sefirot, which Azriel tries to define in their relation to the En-Sof as well as to one another. Although there are contradictions and gaps in Azriel's system, he was the first to gather the scattered elements of the cabalistic doctrines and combine them into an organic whole. Casting aside the haggadic-mystic form of the cabalistic works preceding him, Azriel adopted a style that was equal and at times superior to that of the philosophic writers of the time.

[Asher ben David](#), a nephew and pupil of Isaac the Blind, a cabalistic contemporary of Azriel, and probably influenced by him, added little to the development of the Cabala, judging from the few fragments by him that have been preserved. On the other hand, [Isaac ben Sheshet](#) of Gerona, in his "Sha'ar ha-Shamayim," made noteworthy additions to the theoretical part of Azriel's system. The author of "Ha-Emunah we-ha-Bittāḥon," erroneously ascribed to Naḥmanides, must also be included in the school of Azriel; but, desirous only to give a popular presentation of Azriel's doctrines, with a strong admixture of German mysticism, he contributed little to their development. More important is "Sefer ha-Iyyun" (the Book of Intuition), ascribed to the gaon [R. Hamai](#), but really originating in the school of Azriel.

### Naḥmanides.

The cabalists themselves consider [Naḥmanides](#) as the most important pupil of Azriel—a statement not supported by Naḥmanides' works; for his commentary on the Pentateuch, although permeated by mysticism, has little that



pertains to the speculative Cabala as developed by Azriel. Naḥmanides, on the contrary, emphasizes the doctrine of the "creatio ex nihilo," and also insists that attributes can be ascribed to God; while Azriel's En-Sof is the result of the assumption that God is without attributes. Yet Naḥmanides' importance for the development of the Cabala must be recognized. The greatest Talmudic authority of his time, and possessing a large following of disciples, his leaning toward the Cabala was transmitted to his pupils, among whom David ha-Kohen, R. Sheshet, and Abner are especially mentioned. The brothers Isaac b. Jacob and Jacob b. Jacob ha-Kohen also seem to have belonged to the circle of Naḥmanides. His most important pupil, however, and his successor, was Solomon ben Abraham ibn Adret, the great teacher of the Talmud, who also had a strong leaning toward the Cabala, but apparently gave little time to its study. Among his pupils were the cabalists Shem-Ṭob b. Abraham Gaon, [Isaac of Acre](#), and Bahya b. Asher, the last named of whom, by his commentary on the Pentateuch, contributed much to the spread of the Cabala.

Ibn Latif.

Isaac ibn Latif, who flourished about the middle of the thirteenth century, occupies a peculiar and independent position in the history of the Cabala, owing to his attempt to introduce Aristotelianism. Although he founded no school, and although the genuine cabalists did not even consider him as belonging to their group, many of his opinions found entrance into the Cabala. With Maimonides he upheld the principle of the beginning of the world; his statement, God has no will because He *is* will, is borrowed from Gabirol; and in addition he teaches the principle of the emanation of the Sefirot. He conceives of the first immediate divine emanation as the "first created" (נברא הראשון), a godlike, absolutely simple Being, the all-containing substance and condition of everything that is. The other Sefirot proceeded from this in gradual serial emanation, growing more coarse and material as their distance increased from their purely spiritual, divine origin. The relation between the "first created" and all that has since come into existence is like that between the simple geometrical point and the complicated geometrical figure. The point grows to a line, the line to a plane or superficies, and this into a solid; and just as the point is still present as a fundamental element in all geometrical figures, so the "first created" continues to act as the primal, fundamental element in all emanations. This conception of the first Sefirah as a point, or numeral unit, within the universe reappears with special frequency in the presentations of the later cabalists.

"Sefer ha-Temunah."

The real continuation of Azriel's doctrines, however, is to be found in a number of pseudepigraphic works of the second half of the thirteenth century. Although this literature has been preserved only fragmentarily, and has not yet been critically edited to any extent, its trend nevertheless may be clearly discerned. Such works represent the attempt to put the doctrines of "Bahir" and of Azriel into dogmatic form, to shape and determine the old cabalistic teachings, and not to bring forward new ones. Among the important products of this dogmatic Cabala is, in the first place, the little work "Sefer ha-Temunah" (Book of Form), which endeavors to illustrate the principle of emanation by means of the forms of the Hebrew letters. Here for the first time the conception of the Sefirot is laid down in definite formulæ in place of the uncertain statement that they were to be considered as powers (כחות) or as tools (כלים) of God. The Sefirot, according to this book, are powers inhering in God, and are related to the En-Sof as, for instance, the limbs are to the human body. They are, so to speak, organically connected with God, forming one indivisible whole. The question that long occupied the cabalists—namely, how the expression or transmission of the will may be explained in the act of emanation—is here solved in a simple way; for all the Sefirot, being organically connected with the En-Sof, have but one common will. Just as man does not communicate his will to his arm when he wants to move it, so an expression of the will of the En-Sof is not necessary in the act of emanation. Another important principle, which is much in evidence from the Zohar down to the latest cabalistic works, is likewise clearly expressed for the first time in the "Sefer ha-Temunah"; namely, the doctrine of the double emanation, the positive and negative one. This explains the origin of evil; for as the one, the positive emanation, produced all that is good and beautiful, so the other, the negative, produced all that is bad, ugly, and unclean.

The final form was given to Azriel's Cabala by the work "Ma'areket ha-Elohut" in which Azriel's system is presented more clearly and definitely than in any other cabalistic work. The fundamental principle of the Cabala

herein is the potential eternity of the world; hence the dynamic character of the emanations is especially emphasized. The treatment of the Sefirot is also more thorough and extended than in Azriel. They are identified with God; the first Sefirah, **כתר** ("crown"), containing *in potentia* all of the subsequent nine emanations. The doctrine of double emanations, positive and negative, is taught in "Ma'areket," as well as in "Sefer ha-Temunah," but in such a way that the contrast, which corresponds exactly with the syzygy theory of the Gnostics, appears only in the third Sefirah, Binah (= "intelligence"). The author of the "Ma'-areket" proceeds as the "Bahir" in the separation of the three superior from the seven inferior Sefirot, but in a much clearer way: he regards only the former as being of divine nature, since they emanate immediately from God; while the seven lower ones, which were all produced by the third Sefirah, are less divine, since they produce immediately the lower world-matter. A contrast which rules the world can therefore begin only with the third Sefirah; for such contrast can not obtain in the purely spiritual realm.

This point is an instructive illustration of the activity of the cabalists from the time of the "Bahir" (end of the twelfth century) to the beginning of the fourteenth century. Within this period the disjointed mystico-gnostic conceptions of the "Bahir" were gradually and untiringly woven into a connected, comprehensive system.

Side by side with this speculative and theoretical school, taking for its problem metaphysics in the strict sense of the word—namely, the nature of God and His relation to the world—another mystical movement was developed, more religio-ethical in nature, which, as Grätz rightly says, considered "the ritual, or the practical side, to call it so, as the more important, and as the one to which the theosophical side served merely as an introduction." Both these movements had their common starting-point in the geonic mysticism, which introduced important speculative elements into practical mysticism proper. But they also had this in common, that both endeavored to come into closer relationship with God than the transcendentalism of Jewish philosophy permitted, colored as it was by Aristotelianism. Practical mysticism endeavored to make this union possible for every-day life; while speculative thinkers occupied themselves in reaching out toward a monistic construction of the universe, in which the transcendence of the primal Being might be preserved without placing Him outside of the universe.

Both of these movements, with a common end in view, were ultimately bound to converge, and this actually occurred with the appearance of the book called **Zohar** (זוהר = "Splendor"), after Dan. xii. 3, **והמשכילים יזהירו כוהר הרקיע** (= "The wise shall be resplendent as the splendor of the firmament"), showing that it had the "Bahir" (= Bright) for its model. It is in the main a commentary on the Pentateuch, and R. Simon ben Yoḥai is introduced as the inspired teacher who expounds the theosophic doctrines to the circle of his saintly hearers. It first appeared therefore under the title of Midrash R. Simon ben Yoḥai.

The correspondence to the order of the Scripture is very loose, even more so than is often the case in the writings of the Midrashic literature. The Zohar is in many instances a mere aggregate of heterogeneous parts. Apart from the Zohar proper, it contains a dozen mystic pieces of various derivations and different dates that crop up suddenly, thus entirely undoing the otherwise loose texture of the Zohar.

Distinct mention is made in the Zohar of excerpts from the following writings: (1) "Idra Rabba"; (2) "Idra Zutta"; (3) "Matnitin"; (4) "Midrash ha-Ne'elam"; (5) "Ra'aya Mehemna"; (6) "Saba" (the Old); (7) "Raze de-Razin"; (8) "Sefer Hekalot"; (9) "Sifra de-Zeni'uta"; (10) "Sitre Torah"; (11) "Tosefta"; (12) and lastly, "Yanuḳa."

Besides the Zohar proper, there are also a "Zohar Ḥadash" (New Zohar), Zohar to Cant., and "Tiḳḳunim," both new and old, which bear a close relation to the Zohar proper.

### The Zohar Literature.

For centuries, and in general even to-day, the doctrines contained in the Zohar are taken to be *the* Cabala, although this book represents only the union of the two movements mentioned above. The Zohar is both the complete guide of the different cabalistic theories and the canonical book of the cabalists. After the Zohar, which must be dated about the beginning of the fourteenth century, and which received its present shape largely from the hand of **Moses de Leon**, a period of pause ensued in the development of the Cabala, which lasted for more than two centuries and a half. Among the contemporaries of Moses de Leon must be mentioned the Italian Menahem Recanati, whose cabalistic commentary on the Pentateuch is really a commentary on the Zohar.

Joseph b. Abraham ibn Waḳar was an opponent of the Zohar; his Introduction to the Cabala, which exists in manuscript only, is considered by Steinschneider as the best. It was some time before the Zohar was recognized in Spain. Abraham b. Isaac of Granada speaks in his work "Berit Menuḥah" (The Covenant of Rest) of "the words of R. Simon b. Yoḥai," meaning the Zohar. In the fifteenth century the authority of the Cabala, comprising also that of the Zohar, was so well recognized in Spain that Shem-Ṭob ben Joseph ibn Shem-Ṭob (died 1430) made a bitter attack on Maimonides from the standpoint of the Zohar. [Moses Botarel](#) tried to serve the Cabala by his alleged discoveries of fictitious authors and works; while the pseudonymous author of the [Kanaḥ](#) attacked Talmudism under cover of the Cabala about 1415. [Isaac Arama](#) and Isaac Abravanel were followers of the Cabala in the second half of the fifteenth century, but without contributing anything to its development. Nor does the cabalistic commentary on the Pentateuch of Menahem Zioni b. Meir contribute any new matter to the system, although it is the most important cabalistic work of the fifteenth century. Judah Ḥayyaṭ and [Abraham Saba](#) are the only noteworthy cabalists of the end of that century.

The happy remark of Baur, that a great national crisis furnishes a favorable soil for mysticism among the people in question, is exemplified in the history of the Cabala. The great misfortune that befell the Jews of the Pyrenean peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century revived the Cabala. Among the fugitives that settled in Palestine Meir b. Ezekiel ibn Gabbai wrote cabalistic works evincing an acute insight into the speculative Cabala. A Sicilian cabalist, Joseph Saragoza, is regarded as the teacher of David ibn Zimra, who was especially active in developing the Cabala in Egypt. Solomon Molcho and Joseph della Reina (the history of his life is distorted by many legends) represent the reviving mysticism. Deliverance from national suffering was the object of their search, which they thought to effect by means of the Cabala. Solomon Alḳabiz and [Joseph Caro](#), who gradually gathered a large circle of cabalistic dreamers about them, endeavored to attain a state of ecstasy by fasting, weeping, and all manner of stringent asceticism, by which means they thought to behold angels and obtain heavenly revelations. Of their number, too, was Moses Cordovero, rightly designated as the last representative of the early cabalists, and, next to Azriel, the most important speculative thinker among them.

#### Luria's Cabala.

The modern cabalistic school begins theoretically as well as practically with Isaac Luria (1533-72). In the first place, its doctrine of appearance, according to which all that exists is composed of substance and appearance, is most important, rendering Luria's Cabala extremely subjective by teaching that there is no such thing as objective cognition. The theoretical doctrines of Luria's Cabala were later on taken up by the Ḥasidim and organized into a system. Luria's influence was first evident in certain mystical and fanciful religious exercises, by means of which, he held, one could become master of the terrestrial world. The writing of amulets, conjuration of devils, mystic jugglery with numbers and letters, increased as the influence of this school spread. Among Luria's pupils Hayyim Vital and Israel Saruḳ deserve especial mention, both of them being very active as teachers and propagandists of the new school. Saruḳ succeeded in winning over the rich Menahem Azariah of Fano. Thus, a large cabalistic school was founded in the sixteenth century in Italy, where even to-day scattered disciples of the Cabala may be met. [Herrera](#), another pupil of Saruḳ, tried to spread the Cabala among Christians by his "Introduction," written in Spanish. Moses Zacuto, Spinoza's fellow-pupil, wrote several cabalistic works strongly tinged with asceticism, which were not without influence on the Italian Jews. In Italy, however, there appeared also the first antagonists of the Cabala, at a time when it seemed to be carrying everything before it. Nothing is known of Mordecai Corcos' work against the Cabala, a work that was never printed, owing to the opposition of the Italian rabbis. Joseph del Medigo's wavering attitude toward the Cabala injured rather than helped it. Judah de Modena attacked it ruthlessly in his work "Sha'agat Aryeh" (The Lion's Roar); while an enthusiastic and clever advocate appeared, a century later, in the person of Moses Ḥayyim Luzzatto. A century later still, Samuel David Luzzatto attacked the Cabala with the weapons of modern criticism. But in the East, Luria's Cabala remained undisturbed.

#### In the Orient.

After Vital's death and that of the immigrant Shlumieli of Moravia, who by his somewhat vociferous methods contributed much to the spreading of Luria's doctrines, it was especially Samuel Vital, Ḥayyim Vital's son, together with Jacob Zemah, and Abraham Azulai, who endeavored to spread the mode of life ([הנהגות](#)) and the



mystical meditations for prayer (כּוּנִית) advocated by Luria. Frequent bathing (טבילות), vigils on certain nights, as well as at midnight (see Ḥazot), penance for sins, and similar disciplines, were introduced by this aftergrowth of the school of Luria. It must be noted in their favor that they laid great emphasis on a pure life, philanthropy, brotherly love toward all, and friendship. The belief that such actions would hasten the Messianic time grew until it took concrete form in the appearance of Shabbethai Zebi, about 1665. Shabbethaism induced many scholars to study the speculative Cabala more thoroughly; and, indeed, the Shabbethaian Nehemia Ḥayyun showed in his heretical cabalistic works a more thorough acquaintance with the Cabala than his opponents, the great Talmudists, who were zealous followers of the Cabala without comprehending its speculative side. Shabbethaism, however, did not in the least compromise the Cabala in the eyes of the Oriental Jews, the majority of whom even to-day esteem it holy and believe in it.

In Germany and Poland.

While the Cabala in its different forms spread east and west within a few centuries, Germany, which seemed a promising field for mysticism in the beginning of the thirteenth century, was soon left behind. There is no cabalistic literature proper among the German Jews, aside from the school of Eleazar of Worms. Lippman Mühlhausen, about 1400, was acquainted with some features of the Cabala; but there were no real cabalists in Germany until the eighteenth century, when Polish scholars invaded the country. In Poland the Cabala was first studied about the beginning of the sixteenth century, but not without opposition from the Talmudic authorities, as, for instance, Solomon b. Jehiel Luria, who, himself a devout disciple of the Cabala, wished to have its study confined to a small circle of the elect. His friend Isserles gives proof of wide reading in cabalistic literature and of insight into its speculative part; and the same may be said of Isserles' pupil Mordecai Jaffe. But it is perhaps not a mere chance that the first cabalistic work written in Poland was composed by Mattathias Delacrut (1570), of south European descent, as his name indicates. [Asher](#) or [Anschel](#) of Cracow at the beginning of the sixteenth century is named as a great cabalist, but the nature of his doctrine can not be ascertained. In the seventeenth century, however, the Cabala spread all over Poland, so that it was considered a matter of course that all rabbis must have a cabalistic training. Nathan Spiro, [Isaiah Horowitz](#), and Naphtali b. Jacob Elhanan were the chief contributors to the spread of Luria's Cabala in Poland, and thence into Germany. Yet, with the exception of Horowitz's work "Shene Luḥot ha-Berit" (The Two Tablets of the Covenant), there is hardly one among the many cabalistic works originating in Poland that rises in any way above mediocrity. In the following century, however, certain important works appeared on the Cabala by Eybeschütz and Emden, but from different standpoints. The former contributed a monumental work to the speculative Cabala in his "Shem 'Olam" (Everlasting Name); the latter became the father of modern Cabala criticism by his penetrating literary scrutiny of the Zohar.

Ḥasidism.

The real continuation of the Cabala is to be found in Ḥasidism, which in its different forms includes both the mystical and speculative sides. While the doctrines of the ḤaBaD have shown that the Lurianic Cabala is something more than a senseless playing with letters, other forms of Ḥasidism, also derived from the Cabala, represent the acme of systematized cant and irrational talk. Elijah of Wilna's attacks on Ḥasidism chiefly brought it about that those circles in Russia and Poland which oppose Ḥasidism also avoid the Cabala, as the real domain of the Ḥasidim. Although Elijah of Wilna himself was a follower of the Cabala, his notes to the Zohar and other cabalistic products show that he denied the authority of many of the works of the Lurianic writers: his school produced only Talmudists, not cabalists. Although "Nefesh ha-Ḥayyim" (The Soul of Life), the work of his pupil Ḥayyim of Volozhin, has a cabalistic coloring, it is chiefly ethical in spirit. Ḥayyim's pupil, Isaac Ḥaber, however, evinces in his works much insight into the older Cabala. The latter also wrote a defense of the Cabala against the attacks of Modena. The non-Ḥasidic circles of Russia in modern times, though they hold the Cabala in reverence, do not study it.

Critical Treatment of the Cabala.

The critical treatment of the Zohar, begun by Emden, was continued toward the middle of the nineteenth century by a large group of modern scholars, and much was contributed in the course of the following period toward a better understanding of the Cabala, although more still remains obscure. The names of Adolf Franck, M. H. Landauer, H. Joël, Jellinek, Steinschneider, Ignatz Stern, and Solomon Munk, who paved the way for the

scientific treatment of the Cabala, may be noted. Many obscurities will probably become clear as soon as more is known about Gnosticism in its different forms, and Oriental theosophy.

### The Cabala in the Christian World.

This historical survey of the development of the Cabala would not be complete if no mention were made of its relation to the Christian world. The first Christian scholar who gave proof of his acquaintance with the Cabala was Raymond Lulli (born about 1225; died June 30, 1315), called "doctor illuminatus" on account of his great learning. The Cabala furnished him with material for his "Ars Magna," by which he thought to bring about an entire revolution in the methods of scientific investigation, his means being none other than letter and number mysticism in its different varieties. The identity between God and nature found in Lulli's works shows that he was also influenced by the speculative Cabala. But it was [Pico di Mirandola](#) (1463-94) who introduced the Cabala into the Christian world. The Cabala is, for him, the sum of those revealed religious doctrines of the Jews which were not originally written down, but were transmitted by oral tradition. At the instance of Ezra they were written down during his time so that they might not be lost (compare II Esdras xiv. 45). Pico, of course, holds that the Cabala contains all the doctrines of Christianity, so that "the Jews can be refuted by their own books" ("De Hom. Dignit." pp. 329 *et seq.*). He therefore made free use of cabalistic ideas in his philosophy, or, rather, his philosophy consists of Neoplatonic-cabalistic doctrines in Christian garb. Through Reuchlin (1455-1522) the Cabala became an important factor in leavening the religious movements of the time of the Reformation.

### Reuchlin.

The aversion to scholasticism that increased especially in the German countries, found a positive support in the Cabala; for those that were hostile to scholasticism could confront it with another system. Mysticism also hoped to confirm its position by means of the Cabala, and to leave the limits to which it had been confined by ecclesiastical dogma. Reuchlin, the first important representative of this movement in Germany, distinguished between cabalistic doctrines, cabalistic art, and cabalistic perception. Its central doctrine, for him, was the Messianology, around which all its other doctrines grouped themselves. And as the cabalistic doctrine originated in divine revelation, so was the art cabalistic derived immediately from divine illumination. By means of this illumination man is enabled to get insight into the contents of the cabalistic doctrine through the symbolic interpretation of the letters, words, and contents of Scripture; hence the Cabala is symbolical theology. Whoever would become an adept in the cabalistic art, and thereby penetrate the cabalistic secrets, must have divine illumination and inspiration. The cabalist must therefore first of all purify his soul from sin, and order his life in accord with the precepts of virtue and morality.

Reuchlin's whole philosophical system, the doctrine of God, cognition, etc., is entirely cabalistic, as he freely admits. Reuchlin's contemporary, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim (1487-1535), holds the same views, with this difference, that he pays especial attention to the practical side of the Cabala—namely, magic—which he endeavors to develop and explain thoroughly. In his chief work, "De Occulta Philosophia," Paris, 1528, he deals principally with the doctrines of God, the Sefirot (entirely after the fashion of the cabalists), and the three worlds. The last-named point, the division of the universe into three distinct worlds—(1) that of the elements; (2) the heavenly world; and (3) the intelligible world—is Agrippa's own conception but shaped upon cabalistic patterns, by which he also tries to explain the meaning of magic. These worlds are always intimately connected with one another; the higher ever influencing the lower, and the latter attracting the influence of the former.

### Natural Philosophy.

Mention must also be made of Francesco Zorzi (1460-1540), whose theosophy is cabalistic, and who refers to the "Hebræi" ("De Harmonia Mundi," cantus iii. 1, ch. iii.). His doctrine of the threefold soul is especially characteristic, as he uses even the Hebrew terms "Nefesh," "Ruah," and "Neshamah." Natural philosophy in combination with the Christian Cabala is found in the works of the German Theophrastus Paracelsus (1493-1541), of the Italian Hieronymus Cardanus (1501-76), of the Hollander Johann Baptist von Helmont (1577-1644), and of the Englishman Robert Fludd (1574-1637). Natural science was just about to cast off its swaddling-clothes—a crisis that could not be passed through at one bound, but necessitated a number of intermediate steps. Not yet having attained to independence and being bound up more or less with purely

speculative principles, it sought support in the Cabala, which enjoyed a great reputation. Among the above-mentioned representatives of this peculiar syncretism, the Englishman Fludd is especially noteworthy on account of his knowledge of the Cabala. Almost all of his metaphysical ideas are found in the Lurianic Cabala, which may be explained by the fact that he formed connections with Jewish cabalists during his many travels in Germany, France, and Italy.

Cabalistic ideas continued to exert their influence even after a large section of Christianity broke with the traditions of the Church. Many conceptions derived from the Cabala may be found in the dogmatics of Protestantism as taught by its first representatives, [Luther](#) and Melanchthon. This is still more the case with the German mystics Valentin Weigel (1533-88) and Jacob Böhme (1575-1624). Although owing nothing directly to the literature of the cabalists, yet cabalistic ideas pervaded the whole period to such an extent that even men of limited literary attainments, like Böhme, for instance, could not remain uninfluenced. In addition to these Christian thinkers, who took up the doctrines of the Cabala and essayed to work them over in their own way, Joseph de Voisin (1610-85), Athanasius Kircher (1602-84), and Knorr Baron von [Rosenroth](#) endeavored to spread the Cabala among the Christians by translating cabalistic works, which they regarded as most ancient wisdom. Most of them also held the absurd idea that the Cabala contained proofs of the truth of Christianity. In modern times Christian scholars have contributed little to the scientific investigation of cabalistic literature. Molitor, Kleuker, and Tholuk may be mentioned, although their critical treatment leaves much to be desired.

—Teachings:

The name "Cabala" characterizes the theosophic teachings of its followers as an ancient sacred "tradition" instead of being a product of human wisdom. This claim, however, did not prevent them from differing with one another even on its most important doctrines, each one interpreting the "tradition" in his own way. A systematic review of the Cabala would therefore have to take into account these numerous different interpretations. Only one system can, however, be considered here; namely, that which has most consistently carried out the basic doctrines of the Cabala. Leaving [Hasidism](#) aside, therefore, the Zoharistic system as interpreted by Moses Cordovero and Isaac Luria, has most consistently developed these doctrines, and it will be treated here as the cabalistic system par excellence. The literary and historical value of its main works will be discussed in special articles.

The Cabala, by which speculative Cabala (עיונית קבלה) is essentially meant, was in its origin merely a system of metaphysics; but in the course of its development it included many tenets of dogmatics, divine worship, and ethics. God, the world, creation, man, revelation, the Messiah, law, sin, atonement, etc.—such are the varied subjects it discusses and describes.

God.

The doctrine of the En-Sof is the starting-point of all cabalistic speculation. God is the infinite, unlimited being, to whom one neither can nor may ascribe any attributes whatever; who can, therefore, be designated merely as En-Sof (אין סוף = "without end," "the Infinite"). Hence, the idea of God can be postulated merely negatively: it is known what God is not, but not what He is. All positive ascriptions are finite, or as Spinoza later phrased it, in harmony with the Cabala, "omnis determinatio est negatio." One can not predicate of God either will or intention or word or thought or deed (Azriel, in Meir ibn Gabbai's "Derek Emunah," ed. Berlin, p. 4a). Nor can one ascribe to Him any change or alteration; for He is nothing that is finite: He is the negation of all negation, the absolutely infinite, the En-Sof.

Creation.

In connection with this idea of God there arises the difficult question of the creation, the principal problem of the Cabala and a much-discussed point in Jewish religious philosophy. If God be the En-Sof—that is, if nothing exists outside of God—then the question arises, How may the universe be explained? This can not have preexisted as a reality or as primal substance; for nothing exists outside of God: the creation of the world at a definite time presupposes a change of mind on the part of God, leading Him from non-creating to creating. But a change of any kind in the En-Sof is, as stated, unthinkable; and all the more unthinkable is a change of mind on

His part, which could have taken place only because of newly developed or recognized reasons influencing His will, a situation impossible in the case of God. This, however, is not the only question to be answered in order to comprehend the relation between God and the world. God, as an infinite, eternal, necessary being, must, of course, be purely spiritual, simple, elemental. How was it possible then that He created the corporeal, compounded world without being affected by coming in contact with it? In other words, how could the corporeal world come into existence, if a part of God was not therein incorporated?

In addition to these two questions on creation and a corporeal world, the idea of divine rulership of the world, Providence, is incomprehensible. The order and law observable in the world presuppose a conscious divine government. The idea of Providence presupposes a knower; and a knower presupposes a connection between the known and the knower. But what connection can there be between absolute spirituality and simplicity on the one side, and the material, composite objects of the world on the other?

World.

No less puzzling than Providence is the existence of evil in the world, which, like everything else, exists through God. How can God, who is absolutely perfect, be the cause of evil? The Cabala endeavors to answer all these questions by the following assumption:

The Primal Will.

Aristotle, who is followed by the Arabian and Jewish philosophers, taught (see Munk's note to his translation of the "Moreh Nebukim," i. 68) that in God, thinker, thinking, and the object thought of are absolutely united. The cabalists adopted this philosophic tenet in all its significance, and even went a step further by positing an essential difference between God's mode of thinking and man's. With man the object thought of remains abstract, a mere form of the object, which has only a subjective existence in the mind of man, and not an objective existence outside of him. God's thought, on the other hand, assumes at once a concrete spiritual existence. The mere form even is at once a substance, purely spiritual, simple, and unconfined, of course, but still concrete; since the difference between subject and object does not apply to the First Cause, and no abstraction can be assumed. This substance is the first product of the First Cause, emanating immediately from Wisdom, which is identical with God, being His thought; hence, like Wisdom, it is eternal, inferior to it only in degree, but not in time; and through it, the primal will (רצון הקדום), everything was produced and everything is continuously arranged (Azriel, *l.c.* 3a; this point is discussed in detail in Eybeschütz, "Shem 'Olam," pp. 50 *et seq.*). The Zohar expresses this thought in its own way in the words: "Come and see! Thought is the beginning of everything that is; but as such it is contained within itself and unknown. . . . The real [divine] thought is connected with the א"א [the "Not"; in the Zohar א"א = "En-Sof"], and never separates from it. This is the meaning of the words (Zech. xiv. 9) 'God is one, and His name is one'" (Zohar, Wayehi, i. 246b).

Its Wisdom.

The Zohar, as may be seen here, uses the expression "thought" where other cabalists use "primal will"; but the difference of terminology does not imply a difference of conception. The designation "will" is meant to express here merely a negation; namely, that the universe was not produced unintentionally by the First Cause, as some philosophers hold, but through the intention—*i.e.*, the wisdom—of the First Cause. The first necessary and eternal, existing cause is, as its definition "En-Sof" indicates, the most complete, infinite, all-inclusive, and ever actually thinking Wisdom. But it can not be even approached in discussion. The object of its thought, which is also eternal and identified with it, is, as it were, the plan of the universe, in its entire existence and its duration in space and in time. That is to say, this plan contains not only the outline of the construction of the intellectual and material world, but also the determination of the time of its coming into being, of the powers operating to that end in it; of the order and regulation according to fixed norms of the successive events, vicissitudes, deviations, originations, and extinctions to take place in it. The Cabala sought to answer the above-mentioned questions regarding the creation and Providence by thus positing a primal will. The creation of the world occasioned no change in the First Cause; for the transition from potentiality to reality was contained in the primal will already.

Providence.



The primal will contains thus within itself the plan of the universe in its entire infinity of space and time, being for that reason *eo ipso* Providence, and is omniscient concerning all its innumerable details. Although the First Cause is the sole source of all knowledge, this knowledge is only of the most general and simple nature. The omniscience of the First Cause does not limit the freedom of man because it does not occupy itself with details; the omniscience of the primal will, again, is only of a hypothetical and conditional character and leaves free rein to the human will.

The act of creation was thus brought about by means of the Primal Will, also called the Infinite Light (אור אין סוף). But the question still remains unanswered: How is it possible that out of that which is absolute, simple, and indeterminate—it being identical with the "First Cause"—namely, the "Primal Will"—there should emerge determinate, composite beings, such as exist in the universe? The cabalists endeavor to explain the transition from the infinite to the finite by the theory of the *Zimzum*; *i.e.*, contraction. The phenomenon, that which appears, is a limitation of what is originally infinite and, therefore, in itself invisible and imperceptible, because the undefined is insensible to touch and sight. "The En-Sof," says the Cabala, "contracted Himself in order to leave an empty space in the world." In other words, the infinite totality had to become manifold in order to appear and become visible in definite things. The power of God is unlimited: it is not limited to the infinite, but includes also the finite (Azriel, *l.c.* p. 2a). Or, as the later cabalists phrase it, the plan of the world lies within the First Cause; but the idea of the world includes the phenomenon, which must, therefore, be made possible. This power contained in the First Cause the cabalists called "the line" (קו) [compare the Gnostic "Ḳaw la-Ḳaw" mentioned above.—K.]; it runs through the whole universe and gives it form and being.

### Identity of Substance and Form.

But another danger arises here. If God is immanent in the universe, the individual objects—or, as Spinoza terms them, the "modi"—may easily come to be considered as a part of the substance. In order to solve this difficulty, the cabalists point out, in the first place, that one perceives in the accidental things of the universe not only their existence, but also an organic life, which is the unity in the plurality, the general aim and end of the individual things that exist only for their individual aims and ends. This appropriate interconnection of things, harmonizing as it does with supreme wisdom, is not inherent in the things themselves, but can only originate in the perfect wisdom of God. From this follows the close connection between the infinite and the finite, the spiritual and the corporeal, the latter being contained in the former. According to this assumption it would be justifiable to deduce the spiritual and infinite from the corporeal and finite, which are related to each other as the prototype to its copy. It is known that everything that is finite consists of substance and form; hence, it is concluded that the Infinite Being also has a form in absolute unity with it, which is infinite, surely spiritual, and general. While one can not form any conception of the En-Sof, the pure substance, one can yet draw conclusions from the "Or En-Sof" (The Infinite Light), which in part may be cognized by rational thought; that is, from the appearance of the substance one may infer its nature. The appearance of God is, of course, differentiated from that of all other things; for, while all else may be cognized only as a phenomenon, God may be conceived as real without phenomenon, but the phenomenon may not be conceived without Him (Cordovero, "Pardes," xxv., "Sha'ar ha-Temurot"). Although it must be admitted that the First Cause is entirely uncognizable, the definition of it includes the admission that it contains within it all reality, since without that it would not be the general First Cause. The infinite transcends the finite, but does not exclude it, because the concept of infinite and unlimited can not be combined with the concept of exclusion. The finite, moreover, can not exist if excluded, because it has no existence of its own. The fact that the finite is rooted in the infinite constitutes the-beginnings of the phenomenon which the cabalists designate as אור בכחית בריאה ("the light in the test of creation"), indicating thereby that it does not constitute or complete the nature of God, but is merely a reflection of it. The First Cause, in order to correspond to its concept as containing all realities, even those that are finite has, as it were, retired into its own nature, has limited and concealed itself, in order that the phenomenon might become possible, or, according to cabalistic terminology, that the first concentration (צמצום הראשון) might take place. This concentration, however, does not represent the transition from potentiality to actuality, from the infinite to the finite; for it took place within the infinite itself in order to produce the infinite light. Hence this concentration is also designated as בקיעה ("cleavage"), which means that no. change really took place within the infinite, just as we may look into an object through a fissure in its surface while no change has taken place within the object itself. It is only after the infinite light has been produced by this concentration, *i.e.*—after the First Cause has

become a phenomenon—that a beginning is made for the transition to the finite and determinate, which is then brought about by a second concentration.

### Concentration.

The finite in itself has no existence, and the infinite as such can not be perceived: only through the light of the infinite—does the finite appear as existent; just as by virtue of the finite the infinite becomes perceptible. Hence, the Cabala teaches that the infinite light contracted and retired its infinity in order that the finite might become existent; or, in other words, the infinite appears as the sum of finite things. The first as well as the second concentration takes place only within the confines of mere being; and in order that the infinite realities, which form an absolute unity, may appear in their diversity, dynamic tools or forms must be conceived, which produce the gradations and differences and the essential distinguishing qualities of finite things.

### The Sefirot.

This leads to the doctrine of the [Sefirot](#), which is perhaps the most important doctrine of the Cabala. Notwithstanding its importance, it is presented very differently in different works. While some cabalists take the Sefirot to be identical, in their totality, with the Divine Being—*i.e.*, each Sefirah representing only a different view of the infinite, which is comprehended in this way (compare "Ma'areket," p. 8b, below)—others look upon the Sefirot merely as tools of the Divine power, superior creatures, that are, however, totally different from the Primal Being (Recanati, "Ta'ame Mizvot," *passim*). The following definition of the Sefirot, in agreement with Cordovero and Luria, may, however, be regarded as a logically correct one:

God is immanent in the Sefirot, but He is Himself more than may be perceived in these forms of idea and being. Just as, according to Spinoza, the primal substance has infinite attributes, but manifests itself only in two of these—namely, extent and thought—so also is, according to the conception of the Cabala, the relation of the Sefirot to the En-Sof. The Sefirot themselves, in and through which all changes take place in the universe, are composite in so far as two natures may be distinguished in them; namely, (1) that in and through which all change takes place, and (2) that which is unchangeable, the light or the Divine power. The cabalists call these two different natures of the Sefirot "Light" and "Vessels" (אור כלים). For, as vessels of different color reflect the light of the sun differently without producing any change in it, so the divine light manifested in the Sefirot is not changed by their seeming differences (Cordovero, *l.c.* "Sha'ar 'Azamot we-Kelim," iv.).

The first Sefirah, Keter (כתר = "crown," or מעלה רום = "exalted height"), is identical with the primal will (רצון הקדום) of God, and is differentiated from the En-Sof, as explained above, only as being the first effect, while the En-Sof is the first cause. This first Sefirah contained within itself the plan of the universe in its entire infinity of time and space. Many cabalists, therefore, do not include the Keter among the Sefirot, as it is not an actual emanation of the En-Sof; but most of them place it at the head of the Sefirot. From this Keter, which is an absolute unity, differentiated from everything manifold and from every relative unity, proceed two parallel principles that are apparently opposed, but in reality are inseparable: the one masculine, active, called Ḥokmah (חכמה = "wisdom"); the other feminine, passive, called Binah (בינה = "intellect"). The union of Ḥokmah and Binah produces Da'at (דעת = "reason"); that is, the contrast between subjectivity and objectivity finds its solution in reason, by which cognition or knowledge becomes possible. Those cabalists who do not include Keter among the Sefirot, take Da'at as the third Sefirah; but the majority consider it merely as a combination of Ḥokmah and Binah and not as an independent Sefirah.

### Relation of the Cabalistic Spheres. (From Horwitz, "Shefa' Tal," 1612.) The First Three Sefirot.

The first three Sefirot, Keter, Ḥokmah, and Binah, form a unity among themselves; that is, knowledge, the knower, and the known are in God identical, and thus the world is only the expression of the ideas or the absolute forms of intelligence. Thus the identity of thinking and being, or of the real and ideal, is taught in the Cabala in the same way as in Hegel. Thought in its threefold manifestation again produces contrasting principles; namely, Ḥesed (חסד = "mercy"), the masculine, active principle, and Din (דין = "justice"), the feminine, passive principle, also called Paḥad (פחד = "awe") and Geburah (גבורה = "might"), which combine in a common principle, Tiferet (תפארת = "beauty"). The concepts justice and mercy, however, must not be taken in

their literal sense, but as symbolical designations foreexpansion and contraction of the will; the sum of both, the moral order, appears as beauty. The last-named trinity of the Sefirot represents dynamic nature, namely, the masculine Neẓaḥ (נצח = "triumph"); and the feminine Hod (הוד = "glory"); the former standing for increase, and the latter for the force from which proceed all the forces produced in the universe. Neẓaḥ and Hod unite to produce Yesod (יסוד = "foundation"), the reproductive element, the root of all existence.

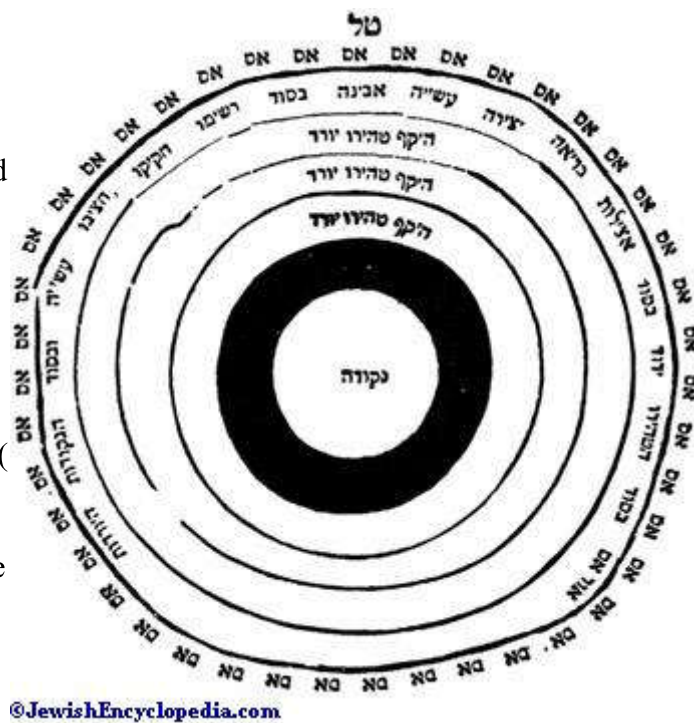
These three trinities of the Sefirot are also designated as follows: The first three Sefirot form the intelligible world (עולם מושכל, or עולם השכל, as Azriel [*l.c.* p. 3b] calls it, corresponding to the κόσμος νοητός of the Neoplatonists), representing, as we have seen, the absolute identity of being and thinking. The second triad of the Sefirot is moral in character; hence Azriel (*l.c.*) calls it the "soul-world," and later cabalists עולם מורנש ("the sensible world"); while the third triad constitutes the natural world (עולם המוטבע, or, as in Azriel [*l.c.*], עולם הגוף, and in the terminology of Spinoza "natura naturata"). The tenth Sefirah is Malkut (מלכות = "dominion"), that in which the will, the plan, and the active forces become manifest, the sum of the permanent and immanent activity of all Sefirot. The Sefirot on their first appearance are not yet the dynamic tools proper, as it were, constructing and regulating the world of phenomena, but merely the prototypes of them.

### The Four Worlds.

In their own realm, called עולם האצילות ("realm of emanation"; see [Azilut](#)), or sometimes [Adam Qadmon](#), because the figure of man is employed in symbolic representation of the Sefirot, the Sefirot are conceived merely as conditions of the finite that is to be; for their activity only begins in the other so-called three worlds; namely, (1) the world of creative ideas (עולם הבריאה), (2) the world of creative formations (ע העצירה), and (3) the world of creative matter (ע העשיה). The earliest description of these four worlds is found in the "Masseket Aẓilut." The first Aẓilutic world contains the Sefirot (כבוד in this passage = ספירות, as Azriel, *l.c.* 5a, says), and in the Beriatic (בריאה) world are the souls of the pious, the divine throne, and the divine halls. The Yeẓiratic (יצירה) world is the seat of the ten classes of angels with their chiefs, presided over by Metatron, who was changed into fire; and there are also the spirits of men. In the 'Asiyyatic (עשיה) world are the ofanim, the angels that receive the prayers and control the actions of men, and wage war against evil or Samael ("Masseket Aẓilut," in Jellinek, "Ginze Hōkmat ha-Qabbalah," pp. 3-4). Although there is no doubt that these four worlds were originally conceived as real, thus occasioning the many fantastic descriptions of them in the early Cabala, they were subsequently interpreted as being purely idealistic.

### The Sefirot in Relation to One Another.(From "Asis Rimmonim," 1601.)

The later Cabala assumes three powers in nature, the mechanical, the organic, and the teleological, which are connected together as the result of a general, independent, purely spiritual, principal idea. They are symbolized by the four worlds. The corporeal world (ע העשיה) is perceived as a world subjected to mechanism. As this can not be derived from a body or corporeality, the Cabala attempts to find the basis for it in the noncorporeal; for even the 'Asiyyatic world has its Sefirot; *i.e.*, non-corporeal powers that are closely related to the monads of Leibnitz. This assumption, however, explains only inorganic nature; while organic, formative, developing bodies must proceed from a power that operates from within and not from without. These inner powers that form the organism from within, represent the Yeẓiratic world, the realm of creation. As there is found in nature not activity merely, but also wise activity, the cabalists call this intelligence manifested in nature the realm of creative ideas. Since, however, the intelligent ideas which are manifested in nature proceed from eternal truths



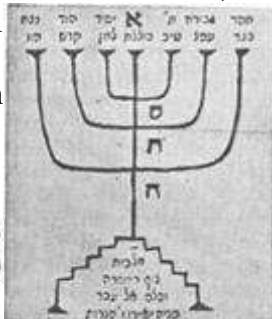


that are independent of existing nature, there must necessarily exist the realm of these eternal truths, the Azilutic world. Hence the different worlds are essentially one, related to one another as prototype and copy. All that is contained in the lower world is found in higher archetypal form in the next higher world. Thus, the universe forms a large unified whole, a living, undivided being, that consists of three parts enveloping one another successively; and over them soars, as the highest archetypal seal, the world of Azilut.

Correct Order of Sefirot Arranged in a Circle. (From "Asis Rimmonim," 1601.) Sefirot in the Form of a Menorah. (From "Asis Rimmonim," 1601.) The



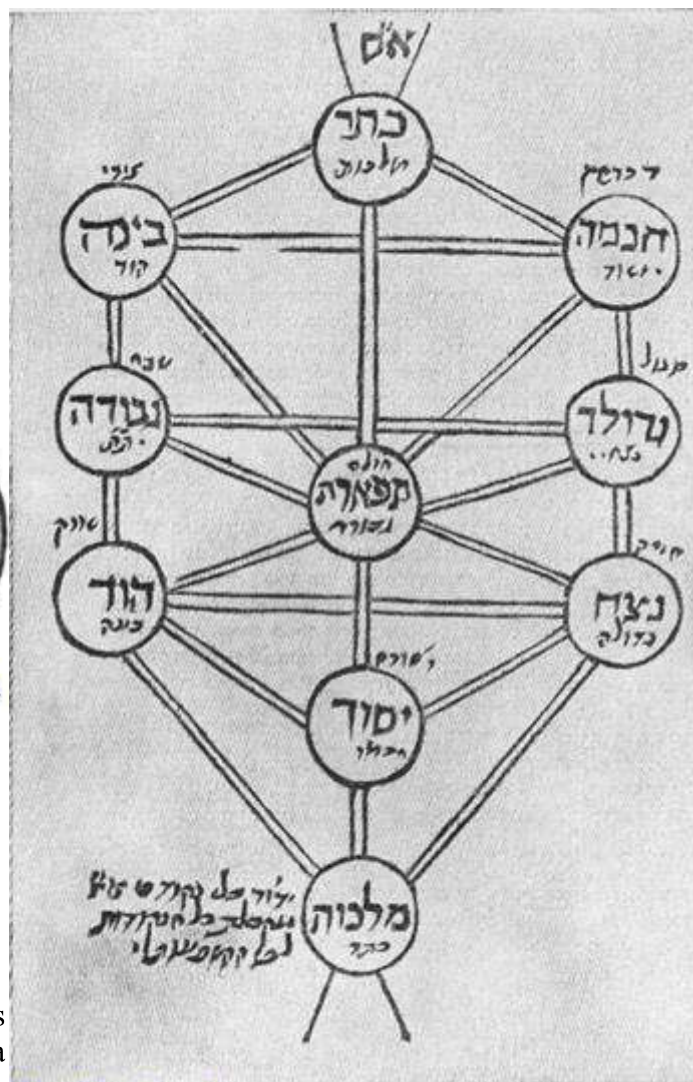
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Aleph as a Symbol of the Four Cabalistic Worlds. (From "Asis Rimmonim," 1601.) Man.

The psychology of the Cabala is closely connected with its metaphysical doctrines. As in the Talmud, so in the Cabala man is represented as the sum and the highest product of creation. The very organs of his body are constructed according to the mysteries of the highest wisdom: but man proper is the soul; for the body is only the garment, the covering in which the true inner man appears. The soul is threefold, being composed of Nefesh, Ruah, and Neshamah; Nefesh (נפש) corresponds to the 'Asiyyatic world, Ruah (רוח) to the Yeziratic, and Neshamah (נשמה) to the Beriatic. Nefesh is the animal, sensitive principle in man, and as such is in immediate touch with the body. Ruah represents the moral nature; being the seat of good and evil, of good and evil desires, according as it turns toward Neshamah or Nefesh. Neshamah is pure intelligence, pure spirit, incapable of good or evil: it is pure divine light, the climax of soul-life. The genesis of these three powers of the soul is of course different. Neshamah proceeds directly from divine Wisdom, Ruah from the Sefirah Tiferet ("Beauty"), and Nefesh from the Sefirah Malkut ("Dominion"). Aside from this trinity of the soul there is also the individual principle; that is, the idea of the body with the traits belonging to each person individually, and the spirit of life that has its seat in the heart. But as these last two elements no longer form part of the spiritual nature of man, they are not included in the divisions of the soul. The cabalists explain the connection between soul and body as follows: All souls exist before the formation of the body in the suprasensible world ([compare Preexistence](#)), being united in the course of time with their respective bodies. The descent of the soul into the body is necessitated by the finite nature of the former: it is bound to unite with the body in order to take its part in the universe, to contemplate the spectacle of creation, to become conscious of itself and its origin, and, finally, to return, after having completed its tasks in life, to the inexhaustible fountain of light and life—God.

Immortality.

While Neshamah ascends to God, Ruah enters Eden to enjoy the pleasures of paradise, and Nefesh remains in peace on earth. This statement, however, applies only to the just. At the death of the godless, Neshamah, being stained with sins, encounters obstacles that make it difficult for it to return to its source; and until it has returned,

Ruah may not enter Eden, and Nefesh finds no peace on earth. Closely connected with this view is the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul ([see Metempsychosis](#)), on which the Cabala lays great stress. In order that the soul may return to its source, it must previously have reached full development of all its perfections in terrestrial life. If it has not fulfilled this condition in the course of *one* life, it must begin all over again in another body, continuing until it has completed its task. The Lurianic Cabala added to metempsychosis proper the theory of the impregnation (עִבּוּר) of souls; that is, if two souls do not feel equal to their tasks God unites both in one body, so that they may support and complete each other, as, for instance, a lame man and a blind one may conjointly do (compare the parable in [Sanh. 91a](#), b). If one of the two souls needs aid, the other becomes, as it were, its mother, bearing it in its lap and nourishing it with its own substance.

### Love, the Highest Relation to God.

In regard to the proper relation of the soul to God, as the final object of its being, the cabalists distinguish, both in cognition and in will, a twofold gradation therein. As regards the will, we may fear God and also love Him. Fear is justified as it leads to love. "In love is found the secret of divine unity: it is love that unites the higher and lower stages, and that lifts everything to that stage where all must be one" (Zohar, wa-Yaḥhel, ii. 216a). In the same way human knowledge may be either reflected or intuitive, the latter again being evidently the higher. The soul must rise to these higher planes of knowledge and will, to the contemplation and love of God; and in this way it returns to its source. The life beyond is a life of complete contemplation and complete love. The relation between the soul and God is represented in the figurative language of the Zoharistic Cabala as follows: "The soul, Neshamah [which proceeds from the Sefirah Binah, as mentioned above], comes into the world through the union of the king with the matrona—'king' meaning the Sefirah Tiferet and 'matrona' the Sefirah Malkut—and the return of the soul to God is symbolized by the union of the matrona with the king." Similarly, the merciful blessing that God accords to the world is symbolized by the first figure; and by the second, the spiritualizing and ennobling of what is material and common through man's fulfilment of his duty.

### Ethics of the Cabala.

It is seen hereby that ethics is the highest aim of the Cabala; it can be shown, indeed, that metaphysics is made subservient to it. The cabalists of course regard the ethical question as a part of the religious one, their theory of influence characterizing their attitude toward ethics as well as law. "The terrestrial world is connected with the heavenly world, as the heavenly world is connected with the terrestrial one," is a doctrine frequently recurring in the Zohar (Noah, i. 70b). The later cabalists formulate this thought thus: The Sefirot impart as much as they receive. Although the terrestrial world is the copy of the heavenly ideal world, the latter manifests its activity according to the impulse that the former has received. The connection between the real and the ideal world is brought about by man, whose soul belongs to heaven, while his body is earthy. Man connects the two worlds by means of his love for God, which, as explained above, unites him with God.

### The Doctrine of Influence.

The knowledge of the law in its ethical as well as religious aspects is also a means toward influencing the higher regions; for the study of the law means the union of man with divine wisdom. Of course, the revealed doctrine must be taken in its true sense; *i.e.*, the hidden meaning of Scripture must be sought out (see Jew. Encyc. i. 409, s.v. [Allegorical Interpretation](#)). The ritual also has a deeper mystical meaning, as it serves to preserve the universe and to secure blessings for it. Formerly this was the object of the ritual sacrifices in the Temple; but now their place is taken by prayer. Devout worship, during which the soul is so exalted that it seems desirous of leaving the body in order to be united with its source, agitates the heavenly soul; that is, the Sefirah Binah. This stimulus occasions a secret movement among the Sefirot of all the worlds, so that all approach more or less to their source until the full bliss of the En-Sof reaches the last Sefirah, Malkut, when all the worlds become conscious of a beneficent influence. Similarly, just as the good deeds of man exert a beneficent influence on all the worlds, so his evil actions injure them.

The question as to what constitutes evil and what good, the cabalists answer as follows:

### The Problem of Evil.

In discussing the problem of evil, a distinction must be made between evil itself, and evil in human nature. Evil is the reverse of the divine [the *left* side, while the good is the right side—a Gnostic idea (see above).—סטרא אחרא K.]. As the divine has true being, evil is that which has no being, the unreal or the seeming thing, the thing as it appears. And here again distinction must be made, between the thing which appears to be but is not—*i.e.*, the appearance of a thing which is unreal—and the appearance of a thing which is what it appears to be—*i.e.*, as a being of its own, having an original type of existence of its own. This "appearance of an appearance" or semblance of the phenomenon is manifested in the very beginnings of the finite and the multiform, because these beginnings include the boundaries of the divine nature; and the boundaries of the divine constitute the godless, the evil. In other words, evil is the finite. As the finite includes not only the world of matter, but, as has been shown above, also its idea, the cabalists speak of the Beriatric, Yeziratic, and 'Asiyyatic worlds of evil, as these worlds contain the beginnings of the finite. Only the world of the immediate emanations (עולם האצילות), where the finite is conceived as without existence and seeking existence, is free from evil. Evil in relation to man is manifested in that he takes semblance for substance, and tries to get away from the divine primal source instead of striving after union with it.

### The Fall of Man.

Most of the post-Zoharic cabalistic works combine with this theory of evil a doctrine on the fall of man resembling the Christian tenet. Connecting with the ancient view of Adam's corporeal and spiritual excellence before the Fall (see Adam in Rabbinical Literature), the later cabalists assert that originally all souls were combined into one, forming the soul of Adam. Man in his original state, therefore, was still a general being, not endowed with the empirical individuality with which he now appears in the world; and together with man the whole lower creation was in a spiritual, glorified state. But the venom of the serpent entered into man, poisoning him and all nature, which then became susceptible to the influence of evil. Then human nature was darkened and made coarse, and man received a corporeal body; at the same time the whole 'Asiyyatic world, of which man had been the lord and master, was condensed and coarsened. The Beriatric and Yeziratic worlds were also affected; influenced by man, they sank like the 'Asiyyatic world, and were also condensed in a proportionately superior degree. By this theory the cabalists explain the origin of physical and moral evil in the world. Yet the Cabala by no means considers man as lost after the Fall. The greatest sinner, they hold, may attract the higher heavenly power by penitence, thus counteracting the poison of the serpent working in him. The warfare between man and the satanic power will only cease when man is again elevated into the center of divine light, and once more is in actual contact with it. This original glory and spirituality of man and of the world will be restored in the Messianic age, when heaven and earth will be renewed, and even Satan will renounce his wickedness. This last point has a somewhat Christian tinge, as indeed other Christian ideas are also found in the Cabala, as, *e.g.*, the trinity of the Sefirot, and especially of the first triad. [But on three powers in the one God compare Philo, "De Sacrificio Abelis et Caini," xv.; *iaem*, "Quæstio in Genes." iv. 2; and F. Conybeare, "Philo's Contemplative Life," 1895, p. 304.—K.] But although the Cabala accepted various foreign elements, actual Christian elements can not be definitely pointed out. Much that appears Christian is in fact nothing but the logical development of certain ancient esoteric doctrines, which were incorporated into Christianity and contributed much to its development, and which are also found in Talmudic works and in Talmudic Judaism.

### Opinions on the Value of the Cabala.

In forming an opinion upon the Cabala one must not be prejudiced by the general impression made on the modern mind by the cabalistic writings, especially the often repulsive Zoharistic Cabala. In former centuries the Cabala was looked upon as a divine revelation; modern critics are inclined to condemn it entirely owing to the fantastic dress in which most cabalists clothe their doctrines, which gives the latter an entirely un-Jewish appearance. If the Cabala were really as un-Jewish as it is alleged to be, its hold upon thousands of Jewish minds would be a psychological enigma defying all process of reasoning. For while the attempt, inaugurated by Saadia, to harmonize Talmudic Judaism with Aristotelianism failed in spite of the brilliant achievements of Maimonides and his school, the Cabala succeeded in being merged so entirely in Talmudic Judaism that for half a century the two were almost identical. Although some cabalists, such as Abulafia and the pseudonymous author of "Kamah," were not favorably disposed toward Talmudism, yet this exception only proves the rule that the cabalists were not conscious of any opposition to Talmudic Judaism, as is sufficiently clear from the fact that men like



Naḥmanides, Solomon ibn Adret, Joseph Caro, Moses Isserles, and Elijah b. Solomon of Wilna were not only supporters of the Cabala, but even contributed largely to its development.

### The Cabala and the Talmud.

As these men were the actual representatives of true Talmudic Judaism, there must have been something in the Cabala that attracted them. It can not have been its metaphysics; for Talmudic Judaism was not greatly interested in such speculations. It must be, then, that the psychology of the Cabala, in which a very high position is assigned to man, appealed to the Jewish mind. While Maimonides and his followers regarded philosophical speculation as the highest duty of man, and even made the immortality of the soul dependent on it; or, speaking more correctly, while immortality meant for them only the highest development of "active intellect" (שכל הפועל) in man, to which only a few attained, the Cabalists taught not only that every man may expect a great deal in the future world, according to his good and pious actions, but even that he is the most important factor in nature in this world. Not man's intelligence, but his moral nature, determines what he is. Nor is he merely a spoke in the wheel, a small, unimportant fragment of the universe, but the center around which everything moves. Here the Jewish Cabala, in contrast to alien philosophy, tried to present the true Jewish view of life, and one that appealed to Talmudic Judaism.

### The Cabala and Philosophy.

The Jew as well as the man was recognized in the Cabala. Notwithstanding the strongly pantheistic coloring of its metaphysics, the Cabala never attempted to belittle the importance of historic Judaism, but, on the contrary, emphasized it. Like the school of Maimonides, the cabalists also interpreted Scripture allegorically; yet there is an essential difference between the two. Abraham and most of the Patriarchs are, for both, the symbols of certain virtues, but with this difference; namely, that the Cabala regarded the lives of the Patriarchs, filled with good and pious actions, as incarnations of certain virtues—e.g., the life of Abraham as the incarnation of love—while allegorical philosophy sought for exclusively abstract ideas in the narratives of Scripture. If the Talmudists looked with horror upon the allegories of the philosophical school, which, if carried out logically—and there have always been logical thinkers among the Jews—would deprive Judaism of every historical basis, they did not object to the cabalistic interpretation of Scripture, which here also identified ideality with reality.

The same holds good in regard to the Law. The cabalists have been reproved for carrying to the extreme the allegorization of the ritual part of the Law. But the great importance of the Cabala for rabbinical Judaism lies in the fact that it prevented the latter from becoming fossilized. It was the Cabala that raised prayer to the position it occupied for centuries among the Jews, as a means of transcending earthly affairs for a time and of feeling oneself in union with God. And the Cabala achieved this at a period when prayer was gradually becoming a merely external religious exercise, a service of the lips and not of the heart. And just as prayer was ennobled by the influence of the Cabala, so did most ritual actions cast aside their formalism, to become spiritualized and purified. The Cabala thus rendered two great services to the development of Judaism: it repressed both Aristotelianism and Talmudic formalism.

### Noxious Influences.

These beneficial influences of the Cabala are, however, counterbalanced by several most pernicious ones. From the metaphysical axiom, that there is nothing in the world without spiritual life, the cabalists developed a Jewish [Magic](#). They taught that the elements are the abode of beings which are the dregs or remnants of the lowest spiritual life, and which are divided into four classes; namely, elemental beings of fire, air, water, and earth; the first two being invisible, while the last two may easily be perceived by the senses. While the latter are generally malicious imps who vex and mock man, the former are well disposed and helpful. Demonology, therefore, occupies an important position in the works of many cabalists; for the imps are related to those beings that are generally designated as demons (שרים), being endowed with various supernatural powers and with insight into the hidden realms of lower nature, and even occasionally into the future and the higher spiritual world. Magic (מעשה שדים) may be practised with the help of these beings, the cabalists meaning white magic in contrast to מעשה כישוף ("the black art").



Natural magic depends largely on man himself; for, according to the Cabala, all men are endowed with insight and magical powers which they may develop. The means especially mentioned are: "Kawwanah" (כוונה) = intense meditation, in order to attract the higher spiritual influence; a strong will exclusively directed toward its object; and a vivid imagination, in order that the impressions from the spiritual world may enter profoundly into the soul and be retained there. From these principles many cabalists developed their theories on casting of lots, [Necromancy](#), [Exorcism](#), and many other superstitions. [Bibliomancy](#) and the mysticism of numbers and letters were developed into complete systems.

### Cabalistic Superstition.

The metaphysical conception of the identity of the real with the ideal gave rise to the mystical conception that everything beheld by our senses has a mystical meaning; that the phenomena may instruct man as to what takes place in the divine idea or in the human intellect. Hence the cabalistic doctrine of the heavenly alphabet, whose signs are the constellations and stars. Thus [Astrology](#) was legitimized, and bibliomancy found its justification in the assumption that the sacred Hebrew letters are not merely signs for things, but implements of divine powers by means of which nature may be subjugated. It is easy to see that all these views were most pernicious in their influence on the intellect and soul of the Jew. But it is equally true that these things did not originate in the Cabala, but gravitated toward it. In a word, its works represent that movement in Judaism which attempted to Judaize all the foreign elements in it, a process through which healthy and abnormal views were introduced together. [Compare Adam Kadmon](#), [Allegorical Interpretation](#), [Amulets](#), [Ascension](#), [Azilut](#), [Creation](#), [Emanation](#), [Metempsychosis](#), [Sefirot](#), [Syzygies](#), [Zohar](#); and, on the relation of the Cabala to non-Jewish religions, [Gnosticism](#).

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Conceived, created, and funded by  
The Kopelman Foundation

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